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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 423. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 6TH, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

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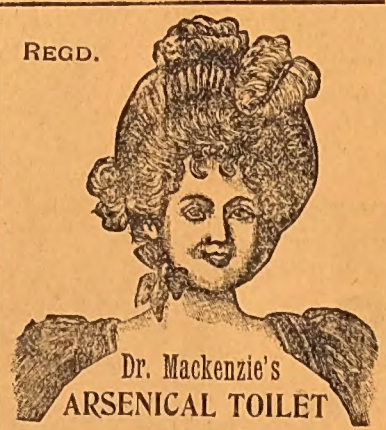

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No. 423.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending February 6th, 1897.

FROM DUSK TO DARKNESS.

I.

WITHIN the outward wall of a great convent, Father Phillip walked alone. The dusk fell quickly. It was the eve of Ascension, and the gathering shadows, enfolding each other in silent embrace, crept gently into night.

The pale outstanding pillars of the building threw cavernous interstices far back amongst the cloisters, so that a host of fiends might have lingered there unseen.

The solitary man was reading, and the naked trees moaned a wild accompaniment to the soul of the book. Presently a deep shadow fell across his book. Looking up, he saw the figure of a nun passing towards the outer gates. The incident was in no way curious, but the rigid walk—so unlike the general bearing of a sister—and the unusual hour, arrested his attention, and he stepped a few paces after her. She reached the gate, and suddenly stopped.

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Then she gave it a thrust with her hands; but it remained unresponsive.

The mere suspicion of a sigh escaped her, a sigh peculiar in its quiet intensity, but of which she seemed to be unconscious. After some hesitation, during which she stood utterly immovable, she bent down, scraping a hole in the encircling snow. Then detaching her crucifix, she placed it quickly in the hollow, and returned the snow to its former condition.

During these movements Father Phillip had come close behind her, witnessing with wonder and indignation her strange performance.

As she rose to go, he took her by the wrist, turning her face towards him: but no sooner had the moonlight touched her features, than he left his hold, and with a cry, sprang several paces back.

He stood petrified, gazing with tongueless awe at her passionless face.

"Madaline!" he gulped at last.

There was no response.

"Madaline!" he said again.

Still no answer.

Then, going with a cat-like tread close up to her, he peered into her eyes, and whispered a long drawn "Madaline!" His voice trembled, but had scarcely a sound.

Stepping back again, he surveyed her at a distance. Though wide open, her eyes were fixed and fireless, like those of a sleep-walker, or a person born blind, or one dead.

Apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, he whispered: "Wait here!" and turned away.

In that one brief space, the established tenour of a strong life, strengthened again as it were by woe, was shattered. He had causes in his heart—projects of spontaneous birth—which thoughts could not fashion.

He crept by the chambers of his chanting brothers, suffering the vespers to stick in his brain.

He reached the room where the keys were kept.

"The key of the outer gate—quick!" he demanded of the monk in charge.

"To-night—Ascension Eve?" queried the man.

"Yes, yes—quickly!"

"I dare not."

"You must—or——"

"Then I *will* not. You——"

In an instant, before the phrase was complete, the hands of Father Phillip were clenched around the man's throat. The shaven head leapt violently up and down, the jaw fell, the eyes rolled upward, and the skinny hands beat and beat again against the stone wall of the cell. Blood dripped from the wretch's mouth where the tongue was nearly bitten through, but not a cry left his blackened lips, so fearful was the grip of the father. A second later the father felt something "click" beneath his fingers, and the man became suddenly limp.

Releasing his hold, Father Phillip took the key and walked swiftly back to where he left the woman.

Not a soul had seen or heard him, and taking his companion's hand, they passed together beyond the convent gates, unmolested.

II.

Many years before the events above recorded, these two had met and loved—loved with all the passion of natures too long restrained. It was a love acknowledging no tie, no relative emotion, no right or wrong.

Then came the fall.

If Satan fell from Archangel to Devil, why not men and women from ideals to frail mortality?

The man was in the wrong, as usual, seeing which he erred still further; also usual.

He tried to deceive himself it was a reiteration that his sin was the natural consequence of love, and that what *is*, *must* have been, and is, consequently, right.

For all this the scales eventually fell from his eyes. Remorse saddled itself on his love, and straightway drove towards a pilgrimage—a life-long palliation.

The woman became insane, and was consequently placed under restraint.

Meanwhile the woman recovered, the only effect of her malady being an inclination to somnambulism. She fancied the voice of the great God addressed her, in response to which, by some strange coincidence, she entered the identical convent where her quandom lover had already for many years been established.

The opening of such a life would naturally be perplexing, and the immediate result was her somnambulistic tendency showed itself, as we have seen, on the very eve of her arrival.

In the hearts of these two the love still raged as strongly as ever.

Father Phillip regarded the meeting as a pre-ordination of Fate. He would possess her, living or dead.

The man still led the woman by the hand, she maintaining a stern insensibility to all transpiring about her. In this order they came upon a rugged, rambling hostelry lying at the bottom of a hollow.

Summoning the keeper, Father Phillip asked for the purchase of beasts and a vehicle. At first the man demurred, casting suspicious glances at the requester's garb and at the statuesque woman by his side. But the sounding chink of money as the Father loosened a bag at his girdle over-scored every scruple, and the equipage was furnished without more ado.

In rewarding the man for his sacrifice, Father Phillip said:

"Take the money, man; it should increase a hundredfold, for it is holy money. Holy in the purpose it serves and holy by reason of its source."

The keeper handled the money as if it were red-hot coal, then, turning into his house, left them to make their departure unassisted.

After the usual preliminaries the cart set off.

The awkwardness occasioned by long absence from such uses soon wore away, and one might have seen that Father Phillip had been and still was an expert driver.

At starting, the pace he kept was very even, skirting all undulations in the ground to avoid jolting. Ever and anon he would glance at the woman beside him to ascertain the effect the change of transit had upon her.

Still she remained unconscious.

By degrees he increased the rate, graduating his efforts with the animals, but never relaxing his watchful care.

They swept along like an awakening hurricane.

The swerves and curves he made to avoid hills were speedily lessened, until, seeing no disturbance in his partner, his course took the line of an arrow. Over hill, over crags and recesses, down hollow and dale, the steaming animals plunged. By hedgerows and wooded land, through drifts and dangerous gullies, they swept like a cloud.

Relaxing his hold somewhat, he gave the beasts their heads. Several times they plunged knee-deep in snow, when with a muffled growl the driver would whip them

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angrily; but so sure-footed were these factors of instinct, and so keen of scent, that no time was lost by the trifling mishaps attendant on such a journey, and which, if too well considered, would probably have been twice as perilous.

Suddenly Father Phillip sprang up, his nostrils distending like a hound's.

He peered back into the darkness.

Listening intently, he heard a faint moaning proceeding from the direction he had travelled.

Gradually to his stiffening ears it became more distinct, eventually assuming the sound of a hollow baying.

The band about his neck snapped sharply as he strained in his eager posture. Then he lashed the animals to a frenzy.

Emerging from a wood, they dashed along a straight road. It stretched along the extreme edge of a precipitous cliff. Far away down below could be heard the thunderous boiling of the sea.

Once or twice, where the land had given way, the cart and its occupants were nearly precipitated down the awful abyss; but so lightning was the speed, that the cart seemed hardly to touch the ground. The road lay stark and ghastly before them, and they literally flew over it.

Standing there in the vehicle, bare-breasted and bare-headed, Father Phillip looked like some legended charioteer sworn to outrun death.

Presently a longer and louder bay swooped upon his ears.

For the first time he uttered a shout—a short, sharp monosyllable, proceeding from far below his throat.

It sped between his parted jaws like a musket shot from the depths of a cavern. Simultaneously, a figure appeared in the path before him. He could characterise no action in particular, but he knew it to be human by reason of its darting swiftly towards the line of his passage.

He saw no more: but the next moment he was conscious of a jolt, accompanied by a piercing shriek, and something flew over the brink of the abyss.

He looked at his companion. A slight tremour shook her, and the mantle of stillness fell. Reviving consciousness laid its hand roughly on her senses, and that oblivion, so closely allied to Heaven, brutally forsook her. Her lids fell quivering. Her hand sought the crucifix at her breast, and she shuddered to find it gone. The languid eyes opened again; this time in the function of sight and inception, and her gaze lighted upon Father Phillip's face. For just an instant they lingered there, when an indiscribable wave swept across her pallid features, the manner of which, probably, had never before been realised.

She sank back without further movement or sound. From the driver's eyes sprang one gleam of deep emotion. His jaws closed, and his finger-nails became embedded in the palms of his hands, so that they dripped blood.

Again the hollow baying reached his ears, and turning he saw two dusky forms limned against the snow. He drove like a madman: lashing the beasts and panting wildly. Foam gathered upon his lips, trailing in his wake like the breath of a demon. Just then another and more frantic exclamation escaped him, for he felt the earth crumbling beneath the wheels of the cart.

With a resounding shriek he urged the animals more madly than before, and with one gigantic bound they cleared the chasm, landing safely on solid ground.

He turned again.

Simultaneously a frightened, frantic wail reverberated through the night. Then there came a roar of falling earth—a terrific crash—as his hungry pursuers fell headlong over the cliff.

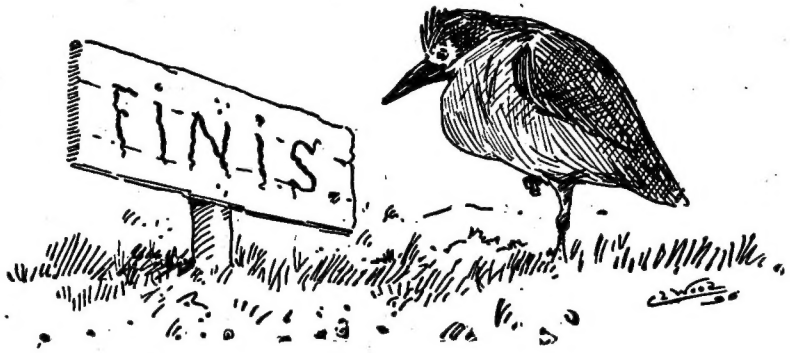
At the same moment the animals fell dead from exhaustion.

Leaping from the cart, he drew the placid woman to his heaving breast, pressing his foaming lips to her forehead.

With a cry of anguish Father Phillip realised his burthen was dead.

"Madaline! Madaline!" he moaned.

Dunstan Denn.



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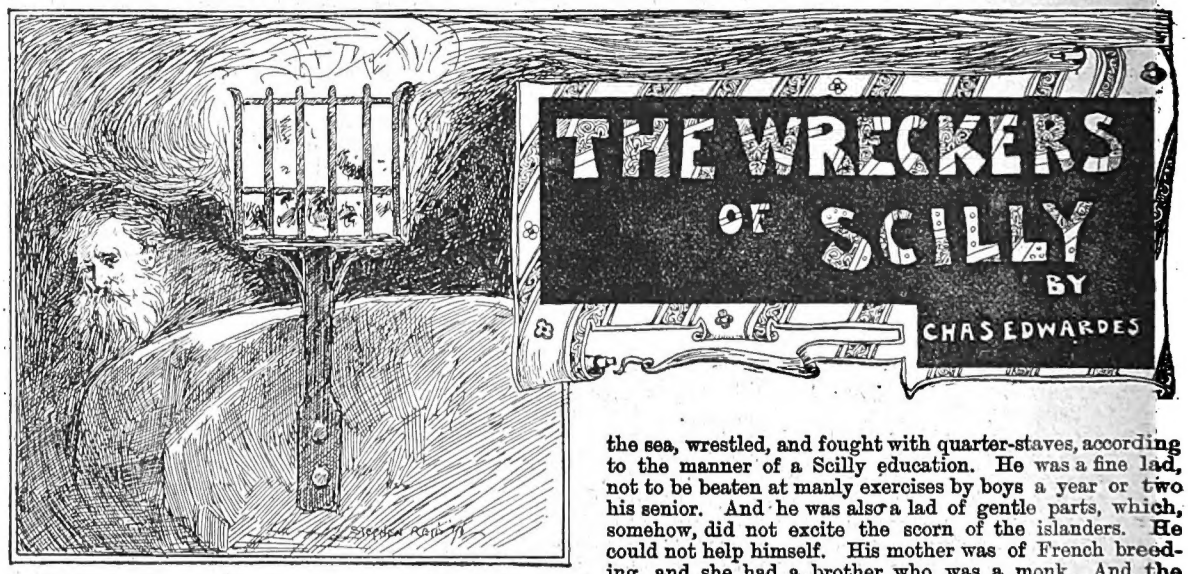

CHAPTER I.

The Flogging of Nigel.

"That for thy evil spirit, and that, and that! A pretty rope's end of a business that men, fathers of fitter lads than thou, should be preached to and blamed by such a barleycorn of a man!"

"I say it, though you kill me for it, Manuel Nance; 'tis a bad trade—a devil's trade, and——"

"Oh, so thou wilt have more of it, wilt? Come, now, off with thy woollens, that I may whack the bare skin o' thee. Quick, man, and you others lend a hand too. 'Tis rare that we heads of St. Agnes should be talked to thus, by this hop-o'-my-thumb!"

But there was a murmuring among the assembled group of islanders. They were not a very merciful set of men to the eye. Their tanned faces and the long, tangled hair of their heads and their bloodshot eyes gave them indeed a formidable appearance that their hearts somewhat belied. For all that, they were a proverb: "A St. Agnes man" even in Scilly meant cruel things; and on the mainland of Cornwall it was but a round-about phrase for assassin.

Still, even the St. Agnes men had feelings of their own. They had known the lad, Nigel Prideaux, since the day when Mistress Prideaux had stretched the babe in their direction as they crowded round the door of the Prideaux hut to drink in their own riotous way to the new inhabitant of the island, thus born into their very exclusive, if not very tender, society.

> Stout limbs!
> Stout heart!
> And a maw for plunder!

Such was their coarse toast to the crying babe! And the mother had smiled towards them, content that they had paid her and the child the customary honours!

And after that young Nigel had rolled and run with the other half-score or so of children in the island, swum in the sea, wrestled, and fought with quarter-staves, according to the manner of a Scilly education. He was a fine lad, not to be beaten at manly exercises by boys a year or two his senior. And he was also a lad of gentle parts, which, somehow, did not excite the scorn of the islanders. He could not help himself. His mother was of French breeding, and she had a brother who was a monk. And the monk, being on a visit to his sister, found time to instil much into the lad's mind, and to adapt him for the acquisition of more knowledge than he was ever likely to get in all Scilly.

Poor monk! The shocks his sensibilities were subjected to among the islanders would have slain a weaker man. He grew to think of the people among whom his sister's lot was cast as little better than devils; nor would he have been surprised to learn that, with their other Pagan and inhuman practices, they were cookers and eaters of the flesh of babes. This also they had been charged with, though upon no certain evidence.

But the monk in time returned to his own land of

They had paid her and the child the customary honours.

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Brittany, and Nigel matured as best he could. There was no such boy of fourteen or fifteen in all Scilly as he. To him it was child's play to swim to Méledgan and back of a morning, even with a swell in the water that would have wearied many a man, and bruised some to death against the black rocks which so closely underlie these sad waters.

And now when our story opens Nigel was nineteen, and a man.

How it had happened even he could not have told precisely, but he was in grievous dissympathy with the rest of St. Agnes—save one.

His mother had died in the meantime. Father he remembered none, for he had gone off to Cornwall one day, with a cloudy sky and a fretful wind, which anon became fierce; nor had he ever returned or been heard of. Doubtless he lay at the bottom of the Atlantic, amid the bones of the myriad of men and ships that the ravenous ocean annually devours.

And so Nigel stood almost alone.

His first notable dissension with the others was about the lives of two men whom he had saved in the night.

It was in November, with a roaring sea from the west. He had risen from his pallet and pushed open the door of his house and gone out into the night with his yellow hair flying loose behind him. It was such a night as he loved. From the adjacent houses—poor, thatched affairs, compounded as to their walls of big granite rocks, turf cuttings, and the beams and door pieces of ships that had been washed ashore in the Bays of St. Warna and Wingletang—he had picked his way towards the low uplands looking west and south. But ere going his eyes had sped in a direction with which they were sweetly familiar. Yon bigger hut, with a glow of light from its horn windows, was the residence of Manuel Nance, who exercised lordship in St. Agnes.

It was a lordship derived rather from his own brute strength and robust nature than aught else, for the Crown, the real Lord of Scilly, had issued no commission in his favour. No matter for that, however, in an isle so savage as St. Agnes. The Crown looked for no profit thence, and so long as the islanders did not notoriously misbehave themselves, they might thrive or starve unquestioned.

But Nigel had not lingered near this tiny sparkle of radiance, for the cry of men in agony had at that instant fluttered with the wind to his ears.

Herein he showed how in substance he differed from the other men of the island. They, at such a note of distress, would have girded their knives to their waists, and, with a vile chorus on their tongues, signifying how little hope there was for shipwrecked mariners who relied for rescue upon them, have hastened towards the rock upon which they trusted to hear the vessel strike. But, they would have cut the throats of any living and breathing mortal whom they had reasonable assurance was not worth holding for ransom. And at any time they would have laughed derisively at the notion that they would imperil their own lives to save the lives of these others whom the thundering Atlantic brought within arm's length of them.

But, thanks to the monk, his uncle, young Nigel was not of so abandoned a disposition. And so it happened that ere daybreak he had returned to his house with two poor fellows, the survivors of ten, whom he cared for as tenderly as if he had been a woman.

This of itself was bad. All St. Agnes, save one, rose against him when it was known, and there was talk of instantly slitting the strange gullets. But Nigel managed to postpone the fatal hour, and the next night, again with a yearning glance at the illuminated horn window, he launched the Prideaux boat and alone ran it towards the mainland, with the two strangers on board. Them he put ashore in St. Sennen's cove, and on the third day he reappeared in St. Agnes.

That same afternoon Manuel Nance had sentenced Nigel to be flogged in the place of execution for his treason

He had met Damaris Nance.

against the majesty of law and custom as they were regarded in St. Agnes.

The place of execution was so called in jest. It was a smooth level space of turf near St. Warna's Well, with the bowsprit and figure-head of a vessel mounted in the turf between a ring of high granite stones. Here in old times the St. Agnes folk had worshipped their heathen gods, danced hand in hand, and submitted to the will of the priest, who was their intermediary with Heaven. But those days had passed; and now every islander was a Christian. The ring of stones, however, remained. The reverence with which it had been regarded had passed to the well hard by.

This was the work of the thrice-reverend St. Warna, who had come to St. Agnes one day from Ireland, and taught the islanders their catechism and the simple precepts of virtue which stand at the heart of Christianity. These precepts St. Agnes had long ago been content to forget; but the islanders remembered St. Warna. And periodically they took a sheep (or, if they could afford it, an ox), tied it to the figure-head of the broken vessel, and cut its throat in honour of the Saint. And in the evening they feasted, and drank strong ale and sack, and sang songs which had nothing of the Christian spirit in them, but much of the fiend.

This was where Nigel was flogged by Manuel Nance, and flogged well, so that the blood ran from his back on to the turf.

And the islanders did not hinder the flogging, though they had qualms. Nor was Manuel himself quite at ease afterwards when, with a tired arm, he stalked to his house, and called to his daughter, Damaris, for a cup of ale, and calling several times to no purpose, he at length found her in a swoon upon the earthen floor of her own room, the window of which, being open, commanded an entire view of

the place of execution. The old woman who tended her had no scruple in telling him what had caused this faint. Indeed, she somewhat jeered at him for having a daughter who could not control herself because she chanced to see the bare back of a young man red with the blood which her own father was so finely drawing from it.

"This once, Manuel Nance, I will endure it at your hands," were the words Nigel had said when the flogging was over, and the Lord of St. Agnes had thrown the rope on the grass. "This once, mind, no more. But it is not for your sake, either!"

Then the others had crowded round him, and the women-folk, ever less brutal than their husbands and brothers, had used oil and herbs to heal the wounds. To all which, though not without smiles and objections, Nigel had submitted. He sat on the grass with his eyes towards the house of Manuel Nance, and let them do their kind, womanly will upon him.

This had happened a month before the opening of my story.

It had been a happy month for Nigel. For three days in succession he had met Damaris Nance at dawn or soon after, amid the granite crags to the north-west of St. Warna's Bay. Damaris had her father's two spotted cows, Mary and Nell, to attend to. It had been mild weather, and the creatures were allowed to be out at night. But in the morning they had to be driven homewards for the milking, which, with the butter-making and all the other gentler arts of domestic life, were Damaris's affair. And Nigel, on a pretence of seeking drift timbers, had gone off at daybreak, too. He was not really bound to account for his own actions so minutely; but it seemed wise to have a pretext. Thus he equivocated excusably to Ban, the idiot lad who helped him with his simple establishment, and could bake bread or broil a mackerel as well as the most accomplished housewife upon the island.

Later, a constant spell of rattling gales had aroused expectation in the minds of the St. Agnes men. The wind was north-west, veering to north-east. In the night, during temporary lulls, the forked lightning played over the needle points of Annet Island, and the more distant western isles. But with the return of daylight the storms also returned, and a misty atmosphere yet further gave hope of disaster, sooner or later, to the rapacious islanders.

And now it was the evening of the seventh day of this unsettled weather. Each night the wicked fellows had kept a beacon fire alight on the headland called Troy Town. It was a misleading light. Mariners who cruised in these waters were accustomed to guide themselves by a beacon above Pelistry Bay, part of the large island of St. Mary's, a mile or two away. They could, by steering well for it, in rough weather get fair shelter between Toll's Bay Island and St. Mary's at this point. But the St. Agnes men meant to lure them to certain ruin by inviting them against the pinnacles and teeth of their island. There was no anchorage by Troy Town except such as Death himself could offer.

It had come to be Nigel's turn to attend to the beacon during the ensuing night, and he had said point blank: "I will not."

Damaris was heart and soul with him in his humane instincts. She had sighed, with her fair head upon his shoulder, and with her soft brown eyes looking into his, as they had discussed her father, and what it behoved them to do to change him.

As if that had been possible! It were as easy to tame a hyena twenty years used to the bloodshed and freedom of the open.

Upon his refusal to do what was reckoned his duty, Manuel Nance, with a flash of his white teeth, had resolved once again to beat young Nigel, this time until he had thoroughly cowed the lad's spirit. But as we have seen, the others interposed, and, with a growl, and a look that meant much, the exasperated and disappointed man had turned on his heel.

Persisting in his refusal, Nigel was passed over for the beacon duty. Another youth, with no scruples of conscience, undertook the charge.

CHAPTER II.

A WRECK! A WRECK!

THAT evening, towards sunset, forty-three of the forty-five dwellers on St. Agnes met in the little glade by the Well of St. Warna to hold execrable revel in the teeth of the gale that still blew mightily. No babe had been born on the island for six years, which by some was viewed as a portent of ill. But the others laughed at the notion that St. Agnes should ever lack men of the same kidney as those who at that time divided the island between them. And little Obadiah Hicks, the latest-born member of the community, ran gleefully at the tail of the throng, chiming out the chorus which was often heard in this unrighteous island:

> "Huzza for the rocks it splits upon,
> And hey for the corpse with its gewgaws on!"

This also was a privilege that Nigel had obtained. He loathed the tradition of St. Warna as it was interpreted by his comrades, and, in strength of his superior enlightenment, did his best to bring it into discredit.

But, of course, he did not succeed in this. The men had drawn the legend into their systems with their mothers' milk. Besides, it ran with their aspirations and degraded beliefs in general.

Nor was Damaris present upon these occasions. This, however, was the less wonderful as it was a bye-word among the islanders how Manuel Nance, her father, kept her apart from the rest. But the old woman, her nurse, went, and a pretty figure she was in the red *coiffure* in which she had attired her head, and her old eyes gleaming with an unhallowed excitement.

"Simple lily-bud," the old woman termed Damaris, in contemptuous pity for her bringing up; and she rejoiced to make the girl shrink and cry out with disgust at her tales of the rude and bloody deeds in which she—a creature of the same texture as Manuel Nance's baby daughter—had had a powerful finger. If the old hag spoke truth, she had used a knife as well as the worst of the men upon the poor wretches who had crawled from the stormy sea upon the St. Agnes rocks, just able to gasp out a word of pleading.

A bold scene it was, to be sure, this on the edge of the Bay of St. Warna, with the angry red glow of the veiled rays of the sun breaking through the storm clouds upon the white foam on the near rocks, and upon the bronzed faces of the men and women. The wind tore at the gowns and hair of the dames and girls, and was at times so violent that it carried them back a step or two in spite of their most vigorous efforts.

No sky could have been more full of promise to the assemblage of miscreants.

As they buffeted their way down the shore, jumping over the lesser boulders and the fragments of ships which lay about like the bones of mammoths, the men scanned the horizon, some with their hands to their eyes. But for the moment nothing was in sight except the raging sea, and the granite edges to their bay, above which the spray rose in fountains a hundred and more feet in height.

The Well of St. Warna was an insignificant enough object. It was a mere shaft sunk in the turf, with a smoothed granite stone as a sort of half lid to it. You could have bestridden it with ease; nor need you have been frightened at the puddle of turbid water which lay at the bottom of it, some ten or twelve feet down. It may have been crystal clear once upon a time. Indeed it probably was if, as the legend says, it owed its origin to a spring. But the iniquitous rites of which it was now the nucleus

may have turned it thick and muddy, and quenched the pure gushing liquid beneath. In short, it was a pool at which the St. Agnes sheep and kine would not have drunk if they could even have got at it.

The men and women formed in cheerless silence, in a half-circle about it, and then, taking each other's hands, they started into song with one accord:

THE HYMN OF ST. WARNA.

A pin for the wind that blows us a ship
Fat packed with good things,
With good things, oh!
Silks, jewels, and rings,
Heavy gold doubloons,
And crowns of the sun,
Of the sun, oh!
Huzza for the rocks it splits upon,
And hey for the corpse with its gewgaws on!
And hey for the corpse with its gewgaws on!

Santa Warna, hear us ask
On our knees thy helping,
While the winds are yelping.
While the winds are yelping.

Send us quick, a fog so thick,
That no ship can 'scape us:
One, two, she's on the rocks,
How she winces with the shocks!
See her shaking!
See her quaking!
And how they screech while drowning!

So a pin for a man and a pin for a boy,
And two pins more for the Saint at the helm;
Huzza for the rocks it splits upon,
And hey for the corpse with its gewgaws on!

Over and over again the St. Agnes islanders chanted this ribald hymn until the twilight was upon them. At the first time, as they mentioned the pins, they all closed in towards the Well, and each (even little Obadiah, who had come provided for it) cast in his or her tribute to the saint—"a pin for the wind" that might bring them a ship; "a pin for a man and a pin for a boy; and two pins more for the Saint at the helm!"

As this ceremony had been observed in St. Agnes for generations and was performed several times a year (oftener in winter, than in summer), none could compute the number of pins which St. Warna already had in her well. But, upon the whole, the islanders had no doubt that they were well requited for their expenditure in this particular article of merchandise.

With one more searching glance seawards, Manuel Nance put a stop to the exercise.

"Home, all of ye," he said, with the tone of a man used to be obeyed, "and you, Evan, to your perch, and see you have faggots enough to last the night through."

Men and women each bent the knee in farewell of their dear Saint, and turned away from the Well.

Two hours afterwards every light was extinguished on the island, save that on the headland called Troy Town, and every islander was asleep on his pallet, save Evan Carman, who sat on his granite chair with ears and eyes alert for the sounds that might tell him his flaring beacon was not lit and fed in vain.

At the beginning of the night he could from his post see the reflection in the sky of the legitimate and humane light of Pelistry—on St. Mary's. But by-and-bye the mist came on and obscured it. There was not the ghost of a doubt that any ship driving from the west to the north of St. Mary's would take the St. Agnes light for that of Pelistry, and, in default of being able to seek protection from the gale in other way, would run for the port that might be supposed to underly it.

The wind worsened in the night. Evan, for all the double sheepskin he wore upon his shoulders, shivered under the searching blasts. They ran round the granite rocks where he sheltered himself, and pierced the skins as if they had been mere cotton sheets upon him.

"A murrain upon the night!" he muttered many times, and he strained his eyes towards the east to see if the day might yet show signs of breaking.

But when his patience was most tried, and the blood seemed like to congeal in his veins, suddenly he became rigid as the boulders on the headland hard by, and he faced the waters with eyes wide open.

Had he heard aught, or was it fancy?

The wind wailed in so many keys that but little imagination was needed to distinguish the voices of men, women and children in its various modes of rioting.

Yet Evan was much mistaken if that was not the cry of real men, cold and hungry like himself. He held his hands to his ears, and listened again.

Then came a report differing from the cannonading of the Atlantic upon the cliffs, and in the lull that seemed to follow a faint cry like the mere echo of a human shout just reached him.

Without a moment's delay, young Evan took to his heels. He flung the sheepskins from his shoulders, and ran like one possessed, through the gorse bushes which grew inland from Troy Town. While yet he was a hundred yards from the cluster of cottages which made up the town of St. Agnes, he screamed at full pitch: "A wreck! A wreck!" Nor ever ceased his cry until a score of the men and lads had tumbled from their beds and joined him in the darkness outside.

"Home, all of ye."

CHAPTER III.
The First Kiss.

Manuel Nance appeared with a lanthorn and an iron-shod staff when six or eight of the others had already run off to the headland.

"A gun, say you?" he asked eagerly.

"And a heavy one to make himself heard in such a gale," was Evan's reply.

"Then she may be from the Indies. There ought to be good picking for us after daybreak."

"By St. Nicholas, Master Nance, I hope there will; and I shall have my tenth for telling of her, shall I not, sir?"

"Let's make sure we've got her ere we talk of that, lad. Run and fetch your knife. There's no knowing what may come. These big ships carry great store of men, and a score or two of them may float to us safe and sound if we ain't wide-awake. Get your knife, my son—and tell your women folk to keep to their houses!"

"Faith, an' I will, Master Nance. I was to have cut the throat of the sheep in Passion Week past; but they robbed me of the pleasure. I'd fain try my hand on higher tasks."

"Be off with you, you knave! You may have more of your wish than you'll care for," said the older man.

"Father," whispered a sweet young voice——

"Get thee to thy bed, daughter. Where is thy old nurse?"

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"Gone with the men, father. Prithee, father, do not do that which shall bring thee to eternal doom."

"I have no time to be prated to, Damaris, my daughter. Thou, at any rate, shalt not hurt thine eyes with sights too strong for thee—thou timid little turtle dove."

So saying, Manuel Nance drove the outer bolt of his house door into its socket. Often before had the girl thus been caged. And so she did but sigh quietly and lie down again on her bed as her father's heavy tread echoed away.

For a while she tried to sleep afresh. It was too early to be about. Though good amenable creatures, Mary and Nell, her kine, would on no account sanction a milking before their wonted time. And so the girl whispered the Lord's Prayer, and the Tresco Islanders' petition to their St. Nicholas, and was going on with a general confession of her trivial sins, when something arrested her.

No: it was not the wind. That had a voice of its own with which she was familiar enough. It was rather like the patrol of strong feet outside. But when she had held her breath until she was nigh to fainting, and had counted twenty paces—as they seemed—she drew her mind's attention elsewhere.

"It is one of the sheep," she murmured. "What a maiden for fancies I am! My nurse is surely right to say there never yet was girl child born on St. Agnes like to me."

Her thoughts must needs then turn abruptly upon him who was the bright morning star of her existence. When she was happiest she loved best to share her joy with him—if only in imagination. And when depression came over her, as it often did (for she was but seventeen, a time when damsels know not what to make of life, and are whiles frightened by its mysteries and harshness), away to him her soul was wont to flee that it might be fondled, until her strength and self-confidence had returned.

"My Nigel!" she exclaimed to herself; and she drew the silken quilt the closer about her shoulders from strange ecstasy. There was that in the mere utterance of the name that cheered her like nothing else.

But it was even with the vision of Nigel before her, his grey eyes and yellow hair as positive as life itself, that his voice also drifted into her room. Sure there never was youth before like him. So broad of shoulders and so fairly made. Some had mocked him to her for his eyes and hair, and the discord there was between them. But she had never seen that. She never looked at him without feeling that she was privileged to do what none others could—to wit, see into the youth's very soul and read the love for her that lay bowered there.

And now she was not only to see him in her dreams, and her morning visions which were neither pure dreams nor entire consciousness, but she was to hear his voice calling to her.

The winds might howl their worst, and her nurse might be as brutal as she pleased, if this boon also was to be bestowed upon her.

"Dear Nigel!" she said aloud to herself—why should she not, seeing that she was alone—"Dear Nigel, I am happier than I ought to be, because of thee."

But a moment afterwards, and while the silvery echo of her words yet tinkled from the Venetian glass and other treasures in the room, the girl bounded from her bed, and cast the silken counterpane upon the floor.

"Yes—I am here, my Nigel!" she cried. "But the words I spake were not for thine ears. I will join thee anon."

And, trembling with the joy that comes to timid girls with their lovers, she began to dress herself.

She had gowns enough to choose from, but for all her finery she cared little. It was the plunder of the sea: her crimson silks and her sapphire-coloured satins; the lace that edged her mantles and the embroidery for her neck. An hour in this thatched hut of St. Agnes, and a skilful tirewoman could have made of her a figure to win the admiration of courtiers.

But she cared not for these treasures—they smelt of death, as she once said to her lover. And so she hastily drew on a plain, puce-coloured bodice, and belted it to her common homespun skirt at the waist. Untanned cowskin shoes covered her pretty little feet. And then her toilet was complete. She would have no shame in bathing her face and hands before Nigel in the cool water in the granite basin by Priglis Bay, whither she would soon be gone for the cows.

As she stepped out by the door which her lover had unbolted for her, the day broke and the dull storm clouds in the west took a brighter hue.

"Damaris, my dear one," said Nigel, taking her by the hand when he had kissed the tips of her fingers, "there will be bad work on the south side of the bay this morning. I know not what to do!"

"Heaven and the Saints keep my father from staining his hands with blood!" exclaimed the girl.

"Didst hear the gun just now?"

"Nay, Nigel, for I was listening to thee!"

"And how didst know that it was I? My Maker has, I trow, given me a face of my own—as he has to all; but how differs my footfall from that of others—of Jewel Fortescue, for example?"

"Jewel Fortescue, quotha!"

"Well then, James Pender?"

"James Pender, he says! Why, Nigel, thy senses have strayed in the night. If the skies were to rain rocks, and each rock were to weigh a ton, then I might, in my ignorance, believe James Pender were taking a solemn walk before my father's house. But thou, Nigel!"

"Am I of such fairy stuff? But hark! Is it not a shame that we should be happy in each other's presence thus while yonder poor souls may be treading on the bridge which leads straight into Eternity?"

"Yet what can we do? My father believes me still in bed. We could not save them."

"Thou couldst not, my diamond eye, and perchance I, too, might mar more than I could mend. But, Damaris, the blood seethes in me. I know not why I am of such various ambitions from the rest. It must be inbred in me from my mother, for I've heard they're milder yonder in Brittany, and all for worship and honest work. But, however that may be, I cannot tarry here, and I will not help them."

"Then since thou art weary of me, and thou——"

"I said not I was weary of thee. I am not five score yet, sweetheart. When I am old and blind and can neither feel nor hear thee, nor taste the memories of thee which will be enthroned in the cobwebbed palace of my mind, then——"

"How flowery thou art, my Nigel! And thine eyes have a brightness in them that almost dazes me! Art sure thou hast not a dreadful fierceness in the back part of thy disposition?"

"Not for thee, my sunbeam, if so. Tell me, then; wilt let me bar thee up again?"

"Marry, no! I will not be barred up like a pig with a litter. It is not seemly treatment of a damsel of my time of life—for I was seventeen last March."

"I know it, beauty, and now thou art seventeen and just fifty-three days and a half."

"Faith, Nigel, there never was such a scholar in all Scilly as thou. To think of thee remembering so much that importest me only!"

"Is that so? I could tell thee more than that, pet. I could, an I would pleasure myself so far on a day like to be so full of dolor—I could number to thee the tale of the silken lashes to thy dear eyes, and score on a table the outline of those pearls, thy teeth, marking infallibly which outvalue the others, and are not to be matched anywhere in the realm. I could describe the exact shape and size, to the millionth of an inch, of the four little beauty spots which thy guardian saint on the happy day of thy birth put upon thy baby face by the touch of his holy finger-tip,

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though little even his saintship recked how fair they would make thee when——"

"Enough!" cried the girl, as she laughingly clapped her palm to the youth's mouth—he submitting with wonderful quietude. "I never heard tongue so runaway as thine, Nigel; and it says the very foolishest of things. Whence dost draw all this nonsense? From what part of thy anatomy? Art dumb at last, sir?"

"I have no choice, my jewel, but to take this little hand prisoner, if I am to open my mouth again. But since I hold it so fairly—how smooth it is, and how blue the veins for an island so sunbrowned as ours!—I would fain hold it always if——"

She stood watching him.

"Marry, good Nigel, I pray thee let me go. I heard the cry of one of my pretty kine."

"Well recollected, Damaris," said the young man abruptly. He let the girl's hand fall, and turned his face seawards. "I fear me I have been weak to tarry with thee, but" (with a fond look in her eyes) "I could not help it. Go thou after the cattle if thou wilt; and tell thy father, too, if thou wilt, who loosed thee from thy cage. I am a man like himself, and have the same yearnings in some kind as he had. I would marry thee, Damaris, though Beelzebub and all his armies massed themselves against me. But I will do nothing against honour."

"Preacher!" exclaimed the girl with a mirthful scoff.

"By this token, my beauty, I mean to preach to thee all the days of thy life—tide what may."

With these words, and somewhat heedless of what he had just said, Nigel suddenly, and like one urged beyond himself, snatched the girl into his arms, drew her passionately towards him, and kissed her lips and her eyes.

"Thou and I, Damaris," he added afterwards, with quivering lips, "were made by the Almighty for each other—I do thee no wrong therefore. And now farewell!"

Not without another ardent look, and a smile in which there was a touch of sternness as well as much sweetness, the young man sped away towards the cliffs. He did not make in the same direction as the other islanders had gone, but moved rather towards the rocks at the extreme west of the Cape of Troy Town. He hoped to be able to see what was going on in St. Warna's Bay without at first being seen. If he could do aught to mitigate the cruelty or inhumanity of his brethren, then he would not mind putting himself to some hazard in the endeavour to do so.

As for Damaris, she stood watching him until she could see him no longer. Never had she looked more lovely than thus, with the colour in her cheeks which her lover had, with so little warning, forcibly constrained thither. She looked on and on—at the dewy grass, the stormy sky, and the white spray of the sea where it rose above the farther slope of the island. But her thoughts were all with her assailant, who had taken such strong possession of her.

"'Tis well," she murmured poutingly, at length, "'tis mighty well to be a man. They do the things we can but just dare to dream of; and yet, indeed, I would not this day have been aught else but a woman, and just the woman I am. Nurse says I'm not a woman until I'm twenty-one; but for once methinks I know better than nurse. I am more of a woman than she is, for he would not do to her what he has done to me. Marry! was it not finely rude of him, and all without a 'Prithee, give me leave,' or 'By your sweet sanction.' And yet, Damaris, my dear, you know—none better—you love him all the more for his rudeness. Sure 'tis passing sweet to be kissed by one's lover. Mary! Mary! Nell! Nell! where are you, harum-scarums? Cows, cows, come and be milked. Oh dear, I shall surely die of pleasure; there's a nectar flowing in my cheeks!"

In this way the girl, fancy free, wandered on as she looked abroad for her cows. But anon a thought seemed to occur to her, and she retraced her steps with all possible speed. She re-entered her father's house and shut the door; and herein she sat on an Oriental six-sided stool with inlaying of mother-of-pearl, with her face buried in her hands, until she heard the lifting of the latch, and her nurse appeared with a red blowsy face, an air of intense excitement, and much dishevelled by the wind.

"Oh, thank you, good nurse, for giving me my freedom; I was growing weary."

"Her freedom, she says," exclaimed the old woman; "a fine thing she'd make of her freedom, a white and pink morsel such as her. Mistress Damaris, if you had spunk in you, you'd never have let yourself be cooped up thuswise. Get spirit, girl, and stuff the notions ye've got from Father Harris of Tresco into the throat of the wind that gives us such merry meals. Look here, girl, that's red for you, ain't it? and this, and this! It's man's blood, my daughter, make what you can of it; and now begone with the milk-pails!"

Damaris needed no second permission to get into the open air again. Her nurse always oppressed her as a sort of nightmare; but there was something quite devilish about her thus gloating over her gory hands. The girl was like to swoon ere she crossed the threshold, and a second time went in pursuit of Mary and Nell.

CHAPTER IV.

The Tragedy in the Surf.

Alas for the good ship *King Hal!*

She had done stout work against the freebooting Spaniards in the Western seas, and many a cannon ball and many a bolt had she shot right straight to the goal they were aimed at. And this was to be her end, to be broken like a sword scabbard on the hard rocks, which stood sentinel to the homeland that her brave passengers and seamen already scented in the mirky air!

They had had a merry cruise, as such adventures were regarded in those days. A duello with two galleys off the Florida coast, in which each combatant sheered off, content with what the *King Hal* had done against her. The taking of a fort in the Spanish main with a box or two of gold pieces, and a few score of suits of armour and stands of arms. And, best of all, that meritorious victory over the *Santa Trinidad*, a warship half as high again as the *King Hal*, and with a hundred more fighting men upon her. The *Santa Trinidad* meant rich prize money to every man aboard the *King Hal* when Plymouth Sound should be reached. In jest they said their ship sailed the heavier for the gold and silver of which she had relieved the Spaniard, after the tussle off the Azores.

And this was what it all tended to!

They had had fair weather for the Atlantic until, according to the master's reckoning, Old England was but two score hours' distance. But then gales and fog, a driving this way and that, masts over the board, and a leak had put them all in mind of the proverb which bade them not talk of the child before it was born.

And so at length nothing remained for them but to trust in Providence, and fold their arms while they let the ship ride out the storm as best it could. Of what use was the tiller, when they knew not their bearings? And they had but one pole left to which they could hang a sail.

With stout hearts they went to their beds, and gave themselves into the keeping of the master, on the night that was to prove their last.

The captain of the troop that was on board felt anxious, and allowed his anxiety to keep him from sleeping. Sir Francis Seymour had much at stake on the issue of this cruise. He would have given years of his life to be assured that in a day or two they would be safe at anchor in English harbourage.

But the night worsened, and the master had few words of solace to offer to his superior. He tried to pierce the darkness, and listened for the sound of the sea on the rocks, yet more earnestly than young Evan that self-same moment was listening for what he was so soon to hear. But the wind and the waves made so furious a riot between them, and the air was so thick that he could tell nothing of the destiny that was before him, until it was well-nigh accomplished.

Sir Francis clung to a bar on the deck and prayed for the dawn.

"Is it mending?" he asked, as the master lurched past him with a shout to his men.

"It will be long, sir, ere it mends," was the quick reply. "Pray you, content me by withdrawing to your quarters. I fear for you, sir."

But Sir Francis was a proud man, and ill brooked a request even so civilly put. He was about to say words of a choleric turn, when there broke from the master a storm of directions, which for the instant out-roared the wind itself.

"Turn her, for your lives!" he thundered in conclusion, with his arms upstretched so that the light of the lanthorns above made him look as if he were appealing to the dark heavens themselves.

Then even Sir Francis's landsman's eye perceived what strait had come upon them.

A second time they were brought within viewing distance of a row of black, ugly shapes which could have but one meaning.

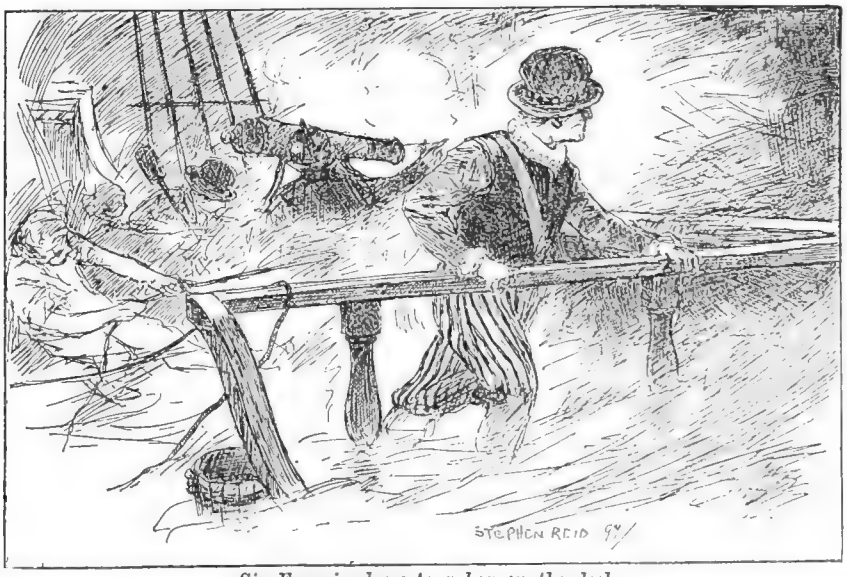
"Are we lost?" he asked.

"I think we are lost, sir," answered the master. "Out with swivel and fire her!" he shouted to the men.

It was done once, then a second and a third time.

Meanwhile, the soldiers from below were crowding on to the deck. They for once heeded not the commands of their captain. Some were in their shirts, some with their doublets unlaced upon their shoulders, and some, avaricious to the last, with their bags of treasure and loot dangling in their hands.

They could all see the cliffs of Troy Town now, only too well. It was odd that the ship had not already been driven upon them. But the current tending against the wind with the tide from St. Mary's was fighting for them. Even yet there was some hope that they might weather the point. If only the struggle between wind and tide lasted a little longer, they might get pushed a fraction more to the north, and then they would at least be free of St. Agnes.



Sir Francis clung to a bar on the deck.

But a sudden grating and instant arrest of the *King Hal* took this hope away, and a wailing sort of sigh came from the two hundred men who had struggled with Death hitherto in so many different forms—and hitherto successfully.

The master and Sir Francis looked each other in the face.

"Dost know where we are?" asked the latter.

"I judge they are the Scillies, sir," was the reply. "Make way there, men. Must I get my cutlass to ye? You must try it, Sir Francis. The stern boat will bear you best."

"You would do well, Sir Master, to take heed of your ship, while she hangs together. I will do what concerns me. How long will she stick thus, dost think?"

"A minute, sir, or an hour. I cannot tell."

A rush of men then parted the two, and the separation was confirmed by the horrid lurch of the ship, as a great wave broke over her from stern to the forecastle cabin. It took off some of the crowd, like the froth from a full tankard of ale. They cried out, and disappeared.

There was no longer any order or possibility of it on the ship.

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A knot of men had rushed to the stern to lower the boat. These had been shattered by the great wave. But fortune favoured the remainder. In a trice they had lowered the boat in the calmer backwater of the wave: a dozen had leapt into her: a dozen more jumped for her, and missed their aim: and then, by a judicious movement, one of the seamen promptly guided the boat where the water was less agitated.

These were all that had any hope of salvation. After the brief pause, another and another towering sea fell upon the doomed ship. She groaned and swayed, and then parted in the middle where the teeth of the rocks had spiked her. There was one more mighty cry, and then the foaming sea was marked with the bodies of men, like a pool with dead leaves in autumn, after a rustle of wind in the overhanging trees.

But the St. Agnes men had not in the meantime been idle. Their eyes were better used to the gloom than those of the dying soldiers and mariners. Besides, the white, tempest-driven reaches of the sea were a background of light, against which the agonies of the drowning men showed up completely.

They stood with their knives in their hands, embracing the fearful coast line, and so near to the water that they were wetted to the skin at each inrushing wave.

Little Obadiah Hicks was with them, much in the background, and his mother held him by the shoulders lest his ardour should endanger his fine young life. But this did not, of course, prevent him from piping forth the chorus of which he was so fond:

> "Huzza for the rocks it splits upon,
> And hey for the corpse with its gewgaws on."

Vain was it for Manuel Nance to signal for the stifling of the young monster. His mother, like the rest, had eyes only for the tragedy. And after all, what did it signify? A child's treble could not be heard in this pandemonium of breaking ship and tempestuous wind and waves.

It was a ghoulish business, carried through with method and but few words.

The ship was so close to the beach of St. Warna's Bay that one after another the bodies were hurled ashore. Most were stunned by the shock, yet not all. But whether dead or alive, the quick stab of a knife put away all doubts. They were practised slaughterers, these men, and they did not waste their energies.

This, however, was simple work to what was now to follow.

Young Pender had spied the ship's boat in a sheltered cove, with every likelihood of being able to land her crew. He told of it to Manuel Nance, who ran himself to see what was doing. Then, with three of the others, he scaled the cliffs, which here impended over the inlet, and, watching their opportunity, they rolled a monstrous block of stone over the edge, so that it crashed into the boat and wrecked it utterly. Of those who were not killed by the stone, the St. Agnes men could easily give an account.

The dawn found them still thus hellishly employed. The bay was littered with dead men; the islanders were reddened with their blood, and tiny rivulets of it oozed down among the stones until it reached the water side, where the waves caught it and snatched it off into the Atlantic, as if it were just what the ocean thirsted for.

At last it seemed that their butchering was all accomplished. They had stood for fully five minutes, knives in hand, with their eyes hungrily fixed upon the sea—and it had brought them nothing more.

Besides, the vessel had gone down. No man could continue to live in such a sea as still prevailed.

They were free, therefore, to look about them in other ways—at their wives and children, for instance, and at the inanimate relics of the *King Hal*, which had already begun to strew their terrible strand. On some of the faces of the women there was an involuntary expression of pity, almost indeed of disgust, for never since any of them could remember had there been so much bloodshed on the island.

But habit and doubt of the propriety of their feelings kept them unprotesting—though they shuddered at what they saw and at the memory of what they had so recently beheld.

Even the men themselves looked askance at each other, as they were now able to reckon up the toll of their achievements.

But Manuel Nance put a summary stop to the reaction which perhaps his experience made him anticipate.

"We have had a hard morning, my lads," he observed, with an attempt at a laugh, that made his bloodstained face look strangely repulsive; "but we shall be richly paid for it ere the day is out—by St. Warna herself, I prophesy that."

Then he sent the women and children away, and while he directed two of the men to continue to stand sentinel over the waves, knife in hand, he set the others digging a wide pit in the ground. Herein were duly cast the stripped bodies of the unfortunate voyagers of the *King Hal*.

When the grave was filled up, the islanders set their backs to the wind, all save those still on guard, and hurried home to break their fast.

(To be continued.)

MELODY.

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Song	*Only Memories*	Frank Moir.
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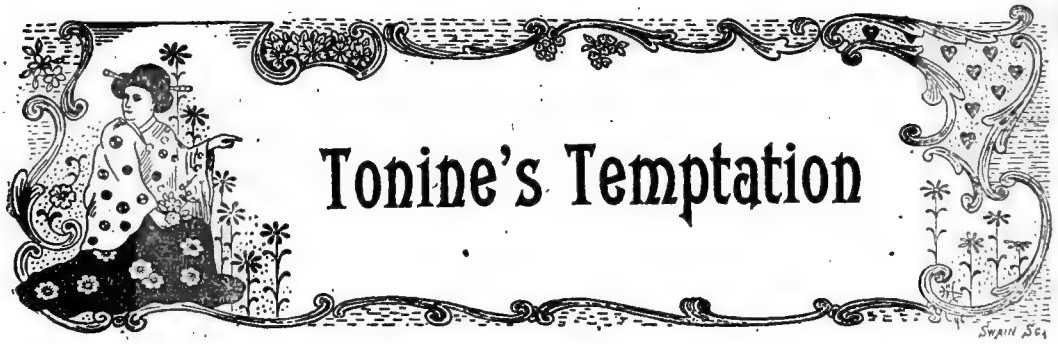

Tonine's Temptation

"Them ain't no fireworks," exclaimed Boule contemptuously.

"*Oui, oui,*" lisped Suzette, hugging the box of matches to her bosom.

"Lemme show you," cried Boule with a sudden inspiration. "I'll set 'em on fire all at once and that will make a fine blaze."

The two children were playing on the dingy stairs of a tenement-house in the French quarter of Soho Square.

Boule, whose real name was Boulanger, was general. He wore a soldier cap made of newspaper upon his sleek, dark head. Two fringed epaulettes decked the shoulders of his faded blue blouse. His sallow face was full of energy, and his black eyes brimmed with mischief.

"*Joli! joli!*" cried Suzette, clapping her fat hands when the box of matches flamed up with an explosive sound.

But a watchful hand seized the boy. The matches fell in a shower of fire on the stairs.

An old woman who was scrubbing the hall turned with a shriek.

"You little villain," cried the slender young girl who shook Boule vigorously, "you wish to burn the house down, eh? So, the papa shall hear of it. This very night shall he hear it."

"Good heavens, those dreadful children," cried the old woman.

"Never mind, Mme. Pierrot; I can put it out," exclaimed the girl, seizing the pail of water and dashing it over the blaze. The frightened children scuttled away upstairs. "Ah, it is well," growled the old woman, "but now, where is my water?"

"See, I will fill it again," said Tonine cheerfully. She went away singing.

"That boy will come to the gallows," muttered Mme. Pierrot, "but the maiden is very gracious."

Tonine seemed to light up the dingy hall with colour; her clothing was shabby and cheap enough, but the coquettish grace of a French girl was not wanting. Her faded pink dress clothed her as the petals clothe the rose. Her figure was supple and round and straight as a young birch tree. Her sailor hat had seen much service, but the small, graceful head was crowned with a pile of wavy locks, dark brown and soft, with a silky sheen. There were dimples in her pink cheeks. Her dark eyes were full of a shy radiance, for Louis Benoit had just told her they were like stars, stars of a summer night.

She ran lightly up the long flight of stairs to the top floor.

An old grey parrot with crimson-tipped wings called out as she entered: "*Voilà*, Tonine."

Then, as if eager to show off his greatest accomplishment, he began to sing in a somewhat cracked voice:

"*Mère Michele a perdu son chat.*"

A very angular, skinny old woman was stirring a pot of cabbage soup over the fire. She wore a pad of embroidery over her grey locks. Her scant black gown showed a gaunt figure, somewhat bowed, but clean. A white curtain screened the one window, and a scarlet geranium bloomed beneath the parrot's cage that swung there.

"Coco will think that he possesses a garden," said Tonine, when she placed it there.

"He will dream of Guerande, my flower-wreathed city," said the grandmamma, sighing.

In one corner of the room hung a picture of the Virgin with a yellow wax candle and some holy water before it. A wreath of immortelles surrounded it, and on the small table lay a prayer book and a rosary. On a larger table were set out some blue plates, and a brown loaf of bread, for the evening repast.

"Oh, there you are at last," grumbled the old woman, as Tonine entered. "It is that you linger on the way home. My old bones are aching; I think it is this climate."

"Sit down then, grandmamma," cried Tonine cheerfully, "I will finish the soup. You will see all will be ready when the papa comes. You take care of yourself and be well for the picnic, you know."

The grandmother sank into a wooden arm chair with a sigh.

"Ah, I make me notting of dat peek-neek anglais." Then, relapsing into French, she went on rapidly: "Oh, but to see one more holiday in my own Guerande. You remember the races, Tonine. That was to be gay. I do see it now: the grey towers, the moss-green water in the moat, and the flowers. Guerande is just smothered in flowers, decked like a maiden for her first ball. The crowds come from far and near, and the church bells ring out. The lads come singing arm in arm. The white caps of the women show from afar. And there is the sea all flecked with foam and the salt pits sparkling in the sunshine. Oh, France; oh my country, I shall never see you again!"

"When's that picnic?" said Boule, stealing from the next room like a culprit, his interest in the affair overcoming his fears.

Boule played with street urchins, who called him Bully, and his English was not undefiled. His mixture of French words with Cockney slang was curious.

"Monday week," said Tonine.

She had put her hat away and was stirring the soup, her dark face growing rosy over the fire.

"And where is it going to be?" asked Boule.

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"Oh, in Greenwich Park."

Suzette had toddled to the table and seized a blue bowl.

She held it out in her little fat hands. "*Bonne soup*," she lisped.

Tonine caught her in her arms and kissed her. "Little angel," she cried.

Suzette nestled against her, the fair cherubic face and golden hair touching Tonine's dark locks.

The work-worn, weary man who opened the door brightened at the sight. His face was very brown and thin, and when he took off his battered cap he showed grizzled hair. Yet Jean Predon was not old. Hard work and misfortune, not years, had lined his face. He moved stiffly, like an old man.

"We were talking of the picnic, papa," cried Tonine, as she dished up the smoking soup. "We will go; is it not so? We could not go last year on account of dear mother. But all your friends will be there and we will hear the Marseillaise and many French songs. You will think you are back in *la belle France* again."

Predon looked at the girl's glowing face. "You shall go," he said. What matter that he must resign the new hat he had been saving for so long?

Tonine cleared away the supper quickly, and then she had to put the children to bed. Predon smoked his pipe and the grandmother took out her knitting.

The young girl was shaking out a scant and torn white frock. She looked at it in despair. Tears filled her eyes. "It is impossible," she said. But she tried it on to be certain of the sad truth. She looked like a flower that had burst its calyx. There was nothing to be done with it. She must stay at home. And she could never tell Louis the reason. She could not expose their poverty to another. The grandmother passed through on her way to bed, and saw her sitting in the white gown like a wan little ghost.

"Behold," cried Tonine, rising and making a little curtesy. "Is it not a pity we are not like the flowers? They have new clothes every year, that are pretty and fit them well. And they grow on them and cost nothing."

"Wear what you have on," said the grandmother shortly. "What matters it?"

"Ah, when you were young did it not matter, grandmother?" asked Tonine.

"Perhaps! There is no money for fine clothes. It is hard to buy bread. If we die there is nothing to bury us."

"Then it is cheaper to live," said Tonine, with a rippling laugh.

The grandmother frowned and walked away.

Tonine woke suddenly from a dazzling dream. She had seen herself in a crisp, dotted Swiss gown, with pretty lace frills and pink satin bows. On her head was a wide Leghorn hat, bent in bewitching angles, with clusters of fine pink flowers nestling in filmy lace. She awoke. There was some strange presence in the room.

Her heart stood still. A glimmering light, a ghost-like figure, moved there. But this ghost was bent with age, and the flickering light showed a dark, strong face and gleaming eyes.

The grandmother was moving with slow, stealthy steps towards the sitting-room. "Is she walking in her sleep, I wonder?" thought Tonine, who was suddenly very wide awake. All at once she heard the click of coin. "Money," she thought, and her heart beat fast. "Can it be that grandmamma has a secret hoard?"

She slipped softly out of bed with a glance at the sleeping child.

On tiptoe she stole to the open door and looked in.

By the small table under the picture of the Virgin, the old woman sat. Spread out on the table before her were several pieces of money. One was a five pound piece that caught Tonine's eyes as it glittered in the light.

"And I never knew there was a drawer in that table," thought Tonine, with quickened breath, at the sight of the money.

The old woman touched each piece fondly as she counted them over. "Oh, Holy Virgin, let me have enough to take me back to my own land when I die! Oh, let me live till I am rich enough to die!" She gathered up the coin and slipped it into an envelope. Tonine saw that the drawer only slid in a groove under the table. The girl had only time to slip into bed and close her eyes, when the old woman crept back again.

"I wonder what she has been saving for? It must have taken a long time," thought Tonine. "And she talked as if she had not a sou. Ah, she is a miser then. She could lend me enough for a frock. That gold piece now would buy everything. I might borrow it."

The thought sent a cold chill over her. "I could pay it back in time. I might work evenings. Angele will be married soon and she will let me make her orange flowers, and there are others."

She saw herself in the toilet of her dream. Louis was gazing at her with adoring eyes.

"I would have one happy day. Louis would dance with me and see me for once *comme il faut*."

"Thief, thief!" whispered a small voice. Tonine looked about her with a startled gaze. It was as if someone whispered in her ear.

But there was no one. "I mean to put it back," she said to the unseen presence. "I am only going to borrow it."

The floor sent a chill through her little bare feet. She shivered in the warm air. She groped about for matches, but when she found one it lit with such an explosive shriek that she dropped it on the floor. She stood there a moment gasping for breath. Then she had to find another match.

At last the lamp was lit. The flames lit up the benign face of the Virgin above it. But there seemed to be a warning glance in those heavenly eyes.

Tonine faltered. A cold hand seemed to clutch her heart.

"But I am only borrowing it," she said, looking resolutely away from the holy picture.

The secret drawer was not hard to find. She wondered she had not discovered it before. In a moment the large white envelope was in her hand.

The writing upon it caught her eye.

"*For my burial in my native land.*"

Tonine felt as if cold water had been thrown in her face. She dropped the envelope. The damp air of a funeral vault seemed to blow about her. Ah, she could not do it. It was like robbing the dead.

No; she would stay at home. Louis would go. He would look into brighter eyes and clasp fairer forms in the gay dances. She would lose him. He was not pledged to her. He was free. But she was not free. When he left her, it was as if all men went with him. He was the one man in all the world for her.

Her heart beat fast now with throbs of pain. She put out her little brown hand and took up the envelope again. The shining gold piece slipped out first. She

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picked it up and it seemed to burn her hand. She suddenly remembered she had not said her prayers that night.

"But grandmother is not going to die. She is strong and well and I shall put the money back," she pleaded with herself.

But all the pretty bloom had faded from her face.

The drawer seemed to groan dolefully as she shut it. Everything was so noisy. The old clock ticked with loud strokes like a hammer on an anvil. Coco in his cage suddenly sang out in his harshest voice:

"*Mère Michele a perdu son chat.*"

* * * * *

The Bank Holiday festivities were in full blast. Greenwich Park was looking its gayest in the summer sunshine. People had come to eat and dance, and these delights filled the hours. The sunbeams danced as if they, too, were having a fête, and the leaves twinkled merrily in the breeze.

The grandmother had been strangely silent and stern all day. She wore her white Breton cap under her bonnet, and a decent black gown. When she dozed at the end of the warm day, Boule took Suzette over to the forbidden shooting gallery. He started at every report and jumped up and down with rapture.

But Suzette trembled and clung to him. "I don't like the bang," she said.

When he found a place where he could peep in, he forgot the child entirely.

Tonine and Louis were struggling out of the crowd in the smaller pavilion. She had danced till she was weary. Her white gown with its floating ribbons was not as crisp as it had been in the morning, but she still looked charming. The curves of her flower-wreathed hat set off the piquant face, where the dimples played hide-and-seek in the pink cheeks. From the crown of her shining hair to the tips of the dainty feet in their canvas shoes she was attired with perfect taste and fitness.

But there was a nervous tension about her. She had rushed from one amusement to another, as if to avoid thought. She felt as if she had quicksilver in her veins or as if she were drunk with new wine. Louis had never left her side. His chains were riveted that day, when he saw her for the first time with the charm of a pretty toilet enhancing her beauty.

She was very tired, and Louis led her away from the crowd to a seat under the shadow of an oak. She knew what was coming by one of those subtle intuitions that none can explain. He loved her, and he meant to tell her so. Thrills of joy went over her, tempered by a touch of pain. She had won, but, oh! had she not lost something that could never be regained? All day, even when gazing into Louis' blue eyes, the haunting thought had tormented her. "If he knew—if he knew I was a thief! How he would start from me in horror and loathing!"

Sometimes she thought of Cinderella at the ball, and how in a flash her fine attire changed to rags. What if she were punished in that way?

But what was Louis saying?

"You know I love you, *petite*. Is it not so? There is no one like you. Only to touch your little hand cheers me like wine. Tell me, *chérie*——"

He was interrupted by a sudden rush and hoarse cries not far away. Some one called out: "A doctor, quick; a doctor."

Tonine started and turned pale. "It is grandmother," she cried. "I feel it; I know it. Something tells me that it is so."

Her coward heart prompted the thought.

"Take me to her, Louis," she faltered. "Oh, if anything has happened, I want to die." Louis looked at her in amazement. But he saw her pallor and the strange misery in her dark eyes, so he said nothing. Boule was crying noisily. He caught Tonine by the arm. "I didn't do nothin'," he sobbed, "only told her I couldn't find Suzette an' she tumbled right over. 'Taint nothin', the peelers 'ill get the kid!"

A friend supported the old woman's rigid form. Her face looked as if carved from stone; her eyes were shut.

"Oh, is she dead; is she dead?" gasped Tonine, seizing one of the cold, nerveless hands.

"It's a shock," cried one.

"It's the heat," cried another.

Tonine was pale to her lips. She shook like a leaf in a storm.

"Oh, Louis," she whispered, "find Suzette; I forgot her. I forgot everyone but you." Louis turned away with a rapturous joy in his heart. After all, the grandmother was old. She had saved his life. But his seemed to lie all before him in sunshine.

It was not hard to find the little one. Affairs were too well regulated for a sobbing child to be lost. She was soon in Tonine's arms. Louis did everything. He brought the vehicle to which the still unconscious grandmother was borne. Boule found a panacea for his grief in the ride home. Tonine held her grandmother's head in her lap, and gazed with terror at the face which looked as strange as if it were a mask.

But this was not death. Once on her own bed, the old woman opened her eyes. Tonine sat by her side, shivering.

She rose and administered some stimulant with trembling hands.

"My son; my Jean," faltered the old woman.

"Oh, he is not here," cried Tonine, "but he will come soon. He is doing overwork; poor papa."

"I must say—good-bye," murmured the grandmother. "I am going—back to my own country."

"No, no," cried Tonine, with sobs. "You must not go—you must not leave me. I want to pay back the money. I saw you count it, grandmother, and I wanted the frock for the fête. I was a wicked girl. I took the gold piece. Oh, forgive me, do not die without forgiving me."

And she dropped on her knees besides the old woman and sobbed in a broken-hearted manner.

The grandmother had been hard and stern at times, but now she feebly stretched out her trembling hand and laid it on the bowed head.

"*Chérie*," she said gently, "I knew it. I forgive you. What matters it where the old woman sleeps? *Le bon Dieu* is as near us here as in my own Guerande. I was young once, *chérie*, and I saw the little love story to-day. The rest of the money shall be for your wedding. I die content—if I can see my boy—my Jean."

"Dear grandmother," cried Tonine. "I do not deserve to be happy. I am not good enough for Louis. But I will punish myself. I will not marry him till every farthing of the money has been earned and restored. And I will not take your savings for the wedding either, but make what is needful myself. Yes, it must be so."

And the grandmother did not die. She lived to dance at Tonine's wedding.

Helen W. Pierson.

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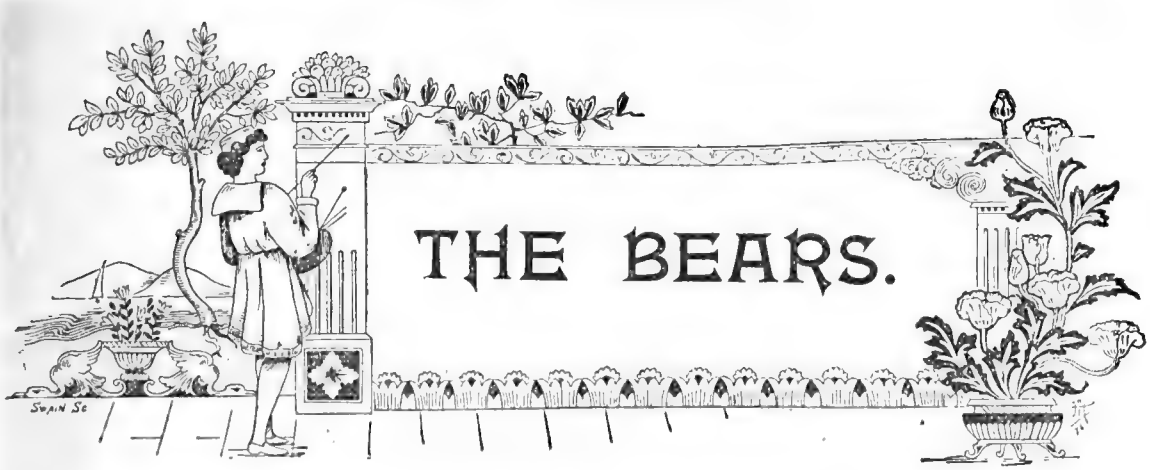

THE BEARS.

In 1875 expired the five years given to the gipsy bear-leaders to abandon their trade. At a fixed date they were to bring their bears to certain places appointed by the government and kill them with their own hands. I happened to witness such an execution in the town of Belsk.

From four counties the unfortunate gipsies gathered with all their households, wives and children, horses and bears. More than a hundred clumsy beasts, from small cubs to old grey bears of immense size, were stationed at the outskirts of the little town.

The gipsy camps awaited in a state of terror the decisive day. Those who came first had to stay there over two weeks, as the police authorities were waiting till all the bear-leaders on the list should arrive, in order to accomplish the execution at one stroke.

The bear-leaders went from village to village, giving their final performances. This was the last chance for the bears to display their artistic skill, so they danced and fought, they gave the familiar representation of how the boys steal beans at the farm, how the young lass walks and how the old woman creeps. It was for the last time, too, that they were treated to a glass of *vodka* (brandy). Standing on his hind legs the bear would take the glass with the soles of his fore paws and bring it to his shaggy snout, he would then raise his head upwards and let the liquid run down his throat. After this he licked his snout clean and expressed his satisfaction in a succession of prolonged growls, mingled with strange gasps.

For the last time the bears were taken on their rounds to the farmhouses, and where the bear walked in on his own accord there was great joy in the house; the animal was led to the place of honour in a front corner of the room, and everybody in the family felt happy, because it is a sign of good luck. But when the bear, in spite of coaxing and patting, obstinately refused to cross the threshold of the house, the hosts were unhappy indeed, and the neighbours said:

"Something wrong inside. He knows."

Most of the bear-leaders came from the western counties, and had to descend a two mile slope before they could reach Belsk, the miserable little town visible in the valley, with its thatched and sheet-iron roofs, and two or three church steeples.

No sooner did they descry the place of their misfortune than the air was filled with an indescribable howling and wailing of women, crying of children, and, above all, the terrific uproar of the bears, which forced the passing train of waggons to turn off the road to avoid the shying of the horses and oxen, and caused the accompanying dogs to slink with a howl of fear far under the waggons. Was it mere sympathy that made the bears join their masters in the wailing? Who knows? Maybe they became aware from the people's talk of the sad fate in store for them.

At the gate of the Police Captain of Belsk a few old gipsies were in waiting. They were dressed in their best holiday attire to appear before the authorities in a decent manner. They all wore long black or blue coats girdled with belts ornamented with silver, silk shirts with gold-gallooned collars, broad velvet pantaloons, and large boots. Some of them wore long boots ornamented all round with flowers of different colours, and all of them had astrachan caps. This attire is donned for occasions of importance only.

"Asleep?" inquired a tall, thin, old gipsy of the policeman who had just come out from the yard.

"He is getting up; he is dressing. He will call you soon," replied the policeman.

The old men, who until now had sat in silence, began to move more nervously and to speak among themselves in a whisper.

"Nothing will come of it," said the oldest among them. "What can he do? Does it depend on him? Bears are killed now all over Russia."

"We will try, Ivan, maybe in some way or other," answered an elderly man.

"We can try," said Ivan mournfully. "Only he cannot help us."

They were called in to the Captain and thronged the waiting-room. When a man with a heavy moustache, dressed in unbuttoned police uniform, under which a red shirt could be seen, appeared before them, the old gipsies bowed their heads low before him—many of them wept.

"Right honourable sir," said Ivan, "think for yourself, what will we do now? We had bears, we lived peacefully, we did not offend anybody. It is true, we have had some mischievous boys among us who are carrying on the wrong trade; but, sir, have you not a great many horse thieves among the Russians? We did not do anybody any harm with our beasts, and it was an amusement for all. What will become of us now? We will have to turn beggars, tramps, and thieves. Our fathers and forefathers were bear-leaders.

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To farm? We do not know how! We are almost all of us good blacksmiths, it is true, and it was well enough when we could go all over the country to find work; but now, when we have to live in one place, the work will not come to us itself. Our boys, sir, out of sheer necessity, will become horse-thieves. As before God, I speak the truth! A great wrong will be done to us and to all the good people by taking away the bears from us. Maybe you will help us? God will repay you for it!"

The old man fell on his knees, and the others did the same. The Captain looked gloomy, with one hand in his pocket, the other pulling at his moustache. The old man took out a pretty thick purse and stretched out his hand.

"I will not take it," said the Captain sternly, "I cannot do anything for you."

"Take it, right honourable sir," implored the crowd. "Perhaps there is some way—you may write somewhere."

"I will not take it," said the Captain more severly. "Not for anything. Nothing can be done. It is a law. Five years were given to you to be ready for it. What is to be done now?" He moved his hands in the air. The gipsies stood silently. The police Captain continued:

"I know myself what a misfortune it is for you and for us; now we shall have to look out all the time for the horses. But what can I do? You, old man, keep this money. When some of your boys fall into my hands with stolen horses, do not expect mercy from me. Keep it, I tell you, old man; you will need it by-and-bye."

"Right honourable sir," said Ivan holding out the purse, "allow me to say another word. Let it be to-morrow" (his voice began to tremble). "Allow us, sir, to do away with them to-morrow. We are tired out with waiting. I have been here two weeks with mine; I have nearly spent all my money."

"Another party of bear-leaders has to come yet, old man. You must wait. The whole town is nearly crazy over your presence here. It must be done at one stroke."

"They are coming, sir! As we came to you we saw them descending the hill. Kind sir, do not torture us any longer."

"Well, if they have come, to-morrow morning at ten o'clock I will be at the camp. Have you rifles?"

"Some of us have, but not all."

"Well, I will ask the Colonel to give you a few rifles from the armoury. You can go! I feel sorry for you."

The old gipsies turned round towards the door when the Captain called them back.

"Hey, there! Turn back! I have something to tell you. You go to the chemist, Foma Fomitch; you know the place, near the cathedral? Go there and tell him I sent you. He will buy up from you all the bears' grease; he uses it to make salves. He may also buy the skins from you. He will pay you a good price for it. Indeed, why should you lose all that?"

The gipsies thanked him courteously, and the crowd adjourned in a body to the chemist. Their hearts were ready to burst, and they gave away for a mere song the mortal remains of their friends. Foma Fomitch bought all the grease at threepence-halfpenny a pound, and about the skins he promised to speak with them later. There they met also the rich merchant, Rogatcheff, and he agreed to take all the hams at three-halfpence per pound.

It was a murky, damp September morning, but the bad weather did not prevent the inhabitants of Belsk from hastening to the meadow to see the extraordinary show. The town looked deserted. All the available carriages, droskies and stages were engaged in carrying off the curiosity seekers to the gipsy camp. The poorer people walked in crowds to the same place, and by ten o'clock the whole town was there.

The gipsies had lost all hope. It was not noisy at the camp, for the women with their little children hid themselves in the tents so that they should not see the execution, and only now and then a cry of exasperation was heard from them. The men, in a feverish state of excitement, made the final preparations. They moved the waggons to one side, put them in line, and chained the beasts to them. The police captain, with the chemist, Foma Fomitch, beside him, passed along the line of the condemned. The bears felt uneasy; the unusual surroundings, the strange preparations, the enormous crowd, the large gathering of their own species—all this made them very excitable. They tossed their chains violently, or gnawed at them, giving out dull and prolonged growls.

Old Ivan stood near his huge, old, lame bear, his son, an elderly gipsy, already grey, and his grandson, with burning eyes, hurriedly chained the bear to the waggon.

The police captain coming near them, said:

"Well, old man, order your boys to start."

A general commotion and tumult began among the throng of the lookers-on, but soon they quieted down, and amidst the dead silence a low, but grave voice was heard. The old man, Ivan, spoke:

"Allow me, kind sir, to say a word or two.

"Comrades, let me be the first to finish. I am the oldest among you. In a year I will be ninety, and have been a bear-leader all my life from childhood. In all the camps you will not find a beast older than mine."

He stooped his curly head over his chest, shook it a few times, and wiped his eyes with his fist. Then he straightened himself up, raised his head, and continued to speak in louder and firmer tones than before:

"That's why I want to be the first to finish. I never thought to live long enough to see such a calamity. I never thought that my beloved bear would live to see it; but it seems such is our fate. With my own hands I have to kill him—my bread-winner, my own benefactor! Untie him, let him loose. He will not go away. It is of no use for us, old comrade, to run from death. Let him loose, Vasia. I do not want to kill him as one would kill cattle—tied up. Don't be afraid," he said to the restless crowd, "he will not hurt anybody."

A young gipsy untied the enormous beast and led him away from the waggon. The bear sat down on his hind legs, the fore-paws hanging down. He swung from side to side, sighing heavily, with a rattle in his throat. Truly, he was very old; his teeth were yellow, his shaggy coat of a faded reddish colour, slightly grizzled. In a friendly and mournful way he looked at his master with his single small eye. Dead silence prevailed. All that could be heard was the clinking of the gun-barrels, and the dull rap of the ramrods upon the wads in charging the rifles.

"Give me the rifle," said the old man firmly.

The son gave him a rifle; he took it, pressed it to his chest, and addressed the bear with the following words:

"In a minute I will kill you, Potap. God help me that my old hand may not tremble, so that the first ball may pierce your heart. I don't want to torture you; it is not such an end as you deserve, my old bear, my dear

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friend. I took you as a young cub; one eye had been put out, your nose was rotted by the ring; you were sick, you were pining away. I looked after you as after my own son; I petted you, reared you, and you grew up a large, brave, and strong bear. Another like you could not be found in all the camps gathered here.

"You grew up, and did not forget my kindness to you. I had not a friend among men as good to me as you were. You were good and gentle, quick of apprehension, you learnt every trick easily. I have never seen a beast better and more intelligent than you. What would have become of me without you? Thanks to your work, all of my family is living now. You earned me three pairs of horses; through you I was able to build a winter hut. You have done a great deal more for me: you have freed my son from the military service. I have a large family, and everyone of them, from the youngest to the oldest, you have fed and provided for. How dearly I love you! I never hit you too hard, and if I have offended you in any way—forgive me. I bow my head to your feet."

He threw himself on the ground before the bear. The animal growled gently and pitifully. The old man was weeping bitterly, his whole body trembled.

"Shoot, father!" exclaimed his son, "do not tear our hearts any longer."

Ivan rose. The tears ceased running from his eyes. He tossed back his grey mane from his forehead, and continued in a firm and clear voice:

"And now I have to kill you. I am ordered to do it, my dearest friend—to shoot you with my own hands. You are not permitted to live any longer in this world. What then? Let God in Heaven be judge between us and these men."

He grasped the rifle with a firm hand, and levelled it at the beast, aiming at the heart, just under the left paw. The bear seemed to understand what it meant. He uttered a pitiful, despairing growl, and raising his two forepaws, as if to cover his eyes, that he might not see the terrible gun, he stood upright.

A heavy moan escaped the ranks of gipsies. Many in the crowd were weeping. With a sob the old man flung the rifle to the ground and fell powerless over it. His son ran to lift him up, and the grandson seized the rifle.

"Enough!" he called out in a wild, desperate voice, his eyes flashing. "Enough! Shoot, boys! Have done with it!"

The young gipsy ran up to the beast, put the muzzle close to its ear and fired. The bear fell down a lifeless mass. Only a spasmodic shudder ran through its paws, and the mouth opened as if in a yawn. The banging of rifles was soon heard in all directions, mixed with the deafening cries of the women and children. The light breeze drove the dense cloud of smoke towards the river.

"He has broken loose! He has broken loose!" was the cry heard suddenly, and in the twinkling of an eye the crowd scattered in all directions, like a flock of frightened sheep. The police Captain, the fat chemist, Foma Fomitch, boys, men, women, girls—all were running in deadly fright, bouncing up against tents and waggons, stumbling and tumbling over each other, and yelling like mad, and the bewildered horses whirled away the carriages. The danger was not very great after all. Maddened with fear the beast, quite a young, dark, grey bear, was running with astonishing ease, a piece of the chain hanging down from his neck.

All gave way before him, and he went like the wind in the direction of the town. Several gipsies ran after him with rifles. The few passers-by in the streets clung to the walls, if they did not succeed in hiding behind the gates. The shutters were closed, all living persons disappeared, and the very dogs vanished.

The bear rushed past the cathedral, up the main street, throwing himself now and then side to side, as if seeking a hiding-place, but the gates and doors were all locked. At the shops he was met with deafening yells by the salesmen, who wanted to frighten him away. He fled past the bank, school building, armoury of the county regiment, and to the other end of the town. He then ran out into the country roads towards the river, and paused.

The pursuers were far to the rear, but soon appeared—a crowd consisting no longer of gipsies alone. The police Captain and the colonel were driving in a drosky with rifles in their hands, and a platoon of soldiers kept pace with them.

"There he is!" cried the captain; "hit him! Fire!" Shots cracked, and one of the bullets wounded the beast. In mortal fright he ran faster than before. A mile from the town, up the river, stood a large water mill, surrounded on all sides by a small but thick grove. The animal took this direction, but, confused by the dams and the arms of the river, he lost his way. There was a broad sheet of water between him and the dense oak thicket, where he might, perhaps, find refuge for a time, if not permanent safety, but he dared not trust to swimming.

This side of the river bank was thickly covered with a strange kind of brushwood which grows only in Southern Russia—the so-called "lichum." The long, flexible, branchless stems grow so close together that it is impossible for a man to get through. Near the roots, however, there are broad chinks and passages by which dogs can make their way; and as they often hide there from the heat, and thus gradually widen the passages, a real labyrinth has been formed in the thicket. Into this the bear plunged.

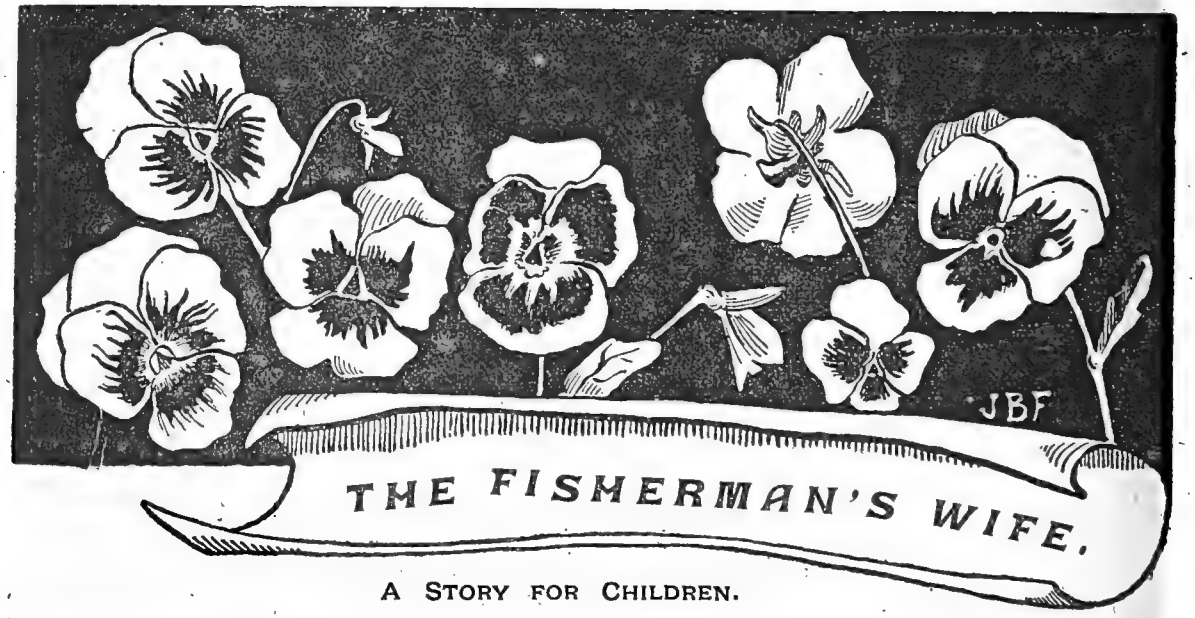
The millers, looking out of the windows of the upper storey of the mill, noticed it, and when the pursuers came up, breathless with fatigue, the police Captain gave orders to surround the place. The unfortunate bear lay deep in the brushwood, the bullet in his thigh giving him intense pain. With his snout buried between his paws, he lay motionless, deafened, maddened with fear, not even dreaming of self-defence. The soldiers sent one bullet after another at random into the thicket, hoping to hit him and thus cause him to show himself; but it was a difficult matter to get at him in this way. He was only killed late in the evening, having been driven out of his place of refuge by fire. Everyone who possessed a rifle deemed it his duty to lodge a bullet in the poor brute's body, and when the skin was taken off it was so riddled that it was good for nothing.

GARSCHINE.

"THE WRECKERS OF SCILLY,"
BY CHARLES EDWARDES,
Commences in SHORT STORIES TO-DAY.

"THE SHADOW-HAND,"
BY LOUIS TRACY,
Commences in SHORT STORIES dated February 20th.

"DEEDS THAT WON THE EMPIRE,"
BY "VEDETTE,"
Commences in SHORT STORIES dated March 6th.



A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

A FISHERMAN was living in a humble cabin with his wife, Stora. One day, after having uselessly spent several hours on the river bank, he suddenly pulled from the water an immense fish, with gold scales and a gold crown on his head.

"Ah!" cried he, "here's a fine catch. I will take it to the king. He will certainly pay me generously for it." But the fish said: "Give me my liberty. I am an enchanted prince, and can accomplish any wish you may express."

"All right," good-naturedly replied the fisherman. "This is the first time I have ever heard a fish speak, and that in itself is a proof of your claim."

Dropping the fish into the water, he returned to his cabin to tell the adventure to his wife. "What!" cried she, "and from that fish, who, no doubt, has the power of a fairy, you demanded nothing?"

"No," said the fisherman, "it did not occur to me. Besides, what could I ask for?"

"What!" she exclaimed, "when we are here in a miserable cabin. You might at least have asked for a cottage. Go back! He is under obligations to you. You saved his life. He can refuse you nothing."

The meek and humble fisherman was not at all anxious to make the attempt, but finally, giving way to his wife's determination, he went to the water's edge and called: "Fish of gold! Royal fish!"

"Why do you call me?" asked the fish.

"Alas!" replied the timid fisherman, "I am obeying my wife, who does not always think as I do."

"And what does she wish at present?" said the fish kindly.

"Ah!" he replied sadly, "she is not satisfied with our small cabin, and wishes a larger one."

"Very well, return home, and you will find your wish accomplished."

In fact, in place of the miserable cabin was a beautiful cottage. Stora was sitting radiantly happy on a bench in front of the door. Taking her husband by the hand, she said:

"Just come and see how beautiful it is!"

There was a bedroom with a comfortable bed, a kitchen with a complete assortment of cooking utensils, and near by a low court, from which came the cackle of geese and chickens. Then followed a garden full of vegetables and an orchard of fruit trees.

"Is it not charming?" cried Stora.

"Yes, indeed," replied the astonished fisherman, and both heartily rejoiced in their good fortune. Fifteen days later Stora said to her husband:

"I have been thinking that we were too modest in making our wishes known. This cottage is too small, and there is not a single field joined to the garden. I should like to have a beautiful country residence."

"What folly!" cried her husband. "What would we do with a country residence?"

"Make yourself easy. I know well of what benefit it would be to us. You have nothing to do but to again see your friend, the golden fish."

The poor fisherman, not being able to resist, went out with bowed head.

"Why do you call me?" cried the crowned fish.

"Alas," replied the fisherman, "I come in obedience to my wife, whose wishes are not always in accord with mine."

"What does she want now?"

"She thinks she would like a beautiful country residence."

"All right, your wish is accomplished."

The fisherman, thanking him, turned homeward. To his surprise he found before him a large house, with court, granaries and stables. His wife waiting for him in her loveliest Sunday dress, led him into their new home.

Here was the master's room and there a large one for the servants. The chimney was full of hams. Not far off was the milk house, and near by a granary full of wheat. In the stable were many beautiful cows. There was a pigeon house on the roof of the shed well filled with fat sheep, and a couple of storks on the chimney. Round the house were gardens, fields, and prairies.

"Is this not a delightful place?" enthusiastically inquired Stora.

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"Yes," replied the fisherman, "see that we live here in peace."

A few days passed, when one morning Stora said to her husband: "It is indeed a good thing to have a country house like this; but we can do better. We can have a château, and live as nobles do. This is what you must demand of your magic fish who is in your debt for life itself."

"No, indeed," said the fisherman, "certainly not. I will not make this additional demand of him. He would be angry, and he would have good cause."

"Oh, I beg of you," implored his wife, "go to him again. He will refuse you nothing. I cannot live in this farmhouse. If I stay here I shall be ill. If I have not a château I shall die."

The apprehensive fisherman again obeyed, and the fish said to him: "Go, your new wish is granted."

When he returned home, what a wonderful change awaited him! In the place of his rustic home, he found a beautiful château with flag waving on the top of its lofty tower; a wide moat surrounded the high walls inclosing the domain, and on its drawbridge stood Stora in a silk gown with a gold chain about her neck. Taking her husband by the hand, she led him to their apartment. Entering the large door, they passed from room to room completely and beautifully furnished with soft carpets, superb hangings, statuary, and pictures. On every side were domestics in livery. In the court stood a carriage with two beautiful horses, a coachman on the seat and a footman up behind. Near by was a garden full of flowers, a conservatory, and aviary.

"Ah!" said Stora with an air of triumph, "what do you think of all this? Is this not better than a country house? Are you not content?"

"Yes," replied the fisherman; "but for the love of all that's good, let us stay here."

A few days later Stora remarked to her husband: "I was on the tower to-day and was astonished and grieved to find how little land we have. It is not enough that you should be a lord. You must have a kingdom. You must be a king."

"What extravagance!" cried the fisherman. "Never, never will I permit it."

"If you do not wish to be king," replied Stora in a resolute tone, "I, nevertheless, am determined to be queen, and I desire you to go and explain my wish to the friend who is under so many obligations to you—to the powerful magician."

"No, indeed," reiterated the fisherman, "he has already been wonderfully generous to us. I do not wish to irritate and tire him."

But the ambitious Stora insisted, begged, and threatened, and the poor fisherman again gave way to her inflexible will. The fish looked upon him in pity, saying sadly: "This time also the wish of your wife is granted."

In place of the lordly château, there was a grand palace with a magnificent façade and four imposing towers. A marble stairway covered with rich carpet led to the first floor, to the reception-room where the ministers, generals, and courtiers were congregated, and where Stora sat on a golden throne, an ermine mantle about her, and a crown of diamonds on her head.

"Finally," said she, enthusiastically, to her husband, "here is a burst of fortune; here is power; here is happiness. There is nothing more I could wish."

"Heaven be praised!" he fervently replied.

A few moments later, with a grave air, she took him by the hand, drawing him into the embrasure of a window that she might talk to him unobserved, and said to him: "I am well satisfied that I am a queen, am contented with the respect of my ministers and the tranquility of my subjects, but sometimes the sun rises too late; sometimes the moon is too late, and sometimes the wind whistles and blows in a manner that inconveniences me greatly. I wish to govern them according to my pleasure. The fairy fish can refuse you nothing. He must grant me this additional favour. It will be the last."

The peaceful fisherman was stupefied. He could not believe she spoke seriously. But when she, in a resolute manner, repeated her demand, he declared he would never take part in any such insanity.

But, alas! the poor man had not the courage to resist the strong will of his companion. After violent protestations, he again acquiesced.

He went in fear and trembling to perform his strange mission. This time the fish regarded him coldly, and said to him in a formidable voice:

"This is enough. Your wife is insane, and you are an imbecile. You will no longer have either chateau or lands. In pity I will give you back your ancient cottage. You deserve no more."

And the fairy fish disappeared beneath the waters. The fisherman turned homeward with bowed head to find his wife dressed in wretched rags, and sitting upon the door-step of their old cabin, lamenting their lost wealth.

Ella Crim Monnette.

JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION.

NO. 29.

On page 180 appears a story, each line of which is numbered. The lines are all in their wrong position, and the prizes mentioned below are offered to those who write on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in the order most nearly correct. The title is jumbled up, and should be correctly given *and pasted on the paper containing the effort.*

The conditions are jumbled in the following paragraph as an example. The correct order of the lines is given in line 10.

1 SHORT STORIES on or before *Monday,*
2 awarded to the readers whose solutions first
3 *JUMBLED STORY.*
4 Four Prizes—one of £5 and three of £1 each—are
5 *February 8th,* and envelopes must be marked
6 correct. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be
7 reach this office.
8 All attempts to be delivered at the offices of
9 offered to the readers whose keys are most nearly
10 4—9—6—2—7—8—1—5—3—12—11—13—10.
11 a sheet of paper the figures in the order they
12 Competitors in doing the story should write on
13 believe to be correct, thus:

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JUMBLED STORY No. 29.

H. BARS FAVORITE SEAT

See Page 179.

"An ice," said the girl scornfully. "An ice! when——?"

"When what?" said he.

"And yet at first you talked of eating ices."

"Yes, it wasn't very pleasant. I didn't enjoy it "in spite of the three years that I have been away in the county, and the dancers stood against the stairs that I have not forgotten yet. Would you care for an ice?"

"Oh, I don't know. When you are so cold and you must forgive me if I am still a little awkward." How can you talk of an ice in that calm way when—Don't you see we are stopping everyone."

"No," he said. "The dancing wasn't up to much. Then it becomes more cheerful, and that is how they talked about; what plans I laid before you?"

"But tell me," she said hastily, as was her wont, the part that I love best. Here, when we danced it in the Rockies. We were made for each other, but you dance with them if you didn't care to?"

"How horrible."

She laughed softly.

"Our steps agree, you see, as well as ever," fanning her softly. "Have you forgotten what I sounded when they brought me back again. This is this waltz. Every note of it is engraved on my house, reported that he distinctly heard this extra blushes that rose to her face. "Let us go up. I cried, as we swept the fields behind us, 'I will break soul to you. 'If you do not say you will marry me,'

"You are always so hasty," she said. "You mind. It's the tune the world goes round to. Softly whispered Cauthorpe, bending his handsome head, "There used to be a little nook away above the dance of death with savage bears."

"I have a partner down for this dance," said the the girl, "and now, of course, the music's stopping, you didn't have such dancing in the Rockies?"

"This waltz," he cried, "ah! you must remember that I braved the dangers of the seas, that I braved my neck over this hedge.' But you did not answer, did you want to kill your partners? And why did I care to dance with."

"Stay with me," cried Cauthorpe. "You musn't frame a 'no,' and then I dug my spurs deep in, and and we galloped on side by side, and that great groom close behind me, and I took my second horse, and sadly at first, and that is how the little waves looked at your lips, and they seemed to be trying to less prosaic topics.

"Yes, it is a catchy tune," she said. "I suppose distant I suppose." She laughed to hide the minute to decide in,' I roared. 'Is it yes or no?' I never gave me time. Even now you don't know nothing but what happened three years ago."

"It was for you," he cried. "It was all for you checking the fountains of his enthusiasm, "why tire yourself for the hunting to-morrow."

"Do you remember when we sat here together before, I looked at you, and my soul went out and and rode like wildfire to the station, and caught the seats, completely hidden with palms.

"And you broke your horse's neck," said the girl. My partners were usually a little bit rough. Once that I don't know quite what happened."

"Ah, that was a gallop to remember. The madness of it went to my brain, and I poured out my chance. The babel of many voices came up from the dangers of the mountains, that I danced the wall, and watched them with envious eyes as they met yours. Don't you remember that?"

"You will break it," she murmured. "Men are so careless."

"Oh, bears," she murmured. "How you frightened me. I thought you meant women."

Cauthorpe was dancing with the handsomest girl three years ago?" he said, taking her fan, and mourned for me when they took me away from you. Cauthorpe's heart beat as a sledge-hammer. "After they began to hug you, you felt as though all your hurt feelings. A thousand recollections came just as we are enjoying it. It always does."

Cauthorpe threw himself back in his chair, a stern stair and looked at his partner's face.

"Ah, the hunting. You remember the last gallop went smoothly round to the soft music of the band. Had she no pity?

"Well, I saw you pass me in safety and ride on, found the nook that he remembered so well—two leaped for eternity."

A despairing partner, wandering wildly over the hedge came nearer and nearer. 'You have half a ordinary sentence from behind a clump of palms:

"It wasn't 'no,' but I do not say that it was 'yes.'"

"Wha-at, wha-at," he whispered hoarsely. "Was it 'yes' or 'no'?"

"You are getting into it again beautifully," said whether I said 'yes' or 'no.'"

"Let's go out before the crowd," said Cauthorpe.

Cauthorpe's colour changed. He bit his lip hard. she always checked him in that way.

Cauthorpe led his partner up the broad stairs, and music of the waltz became faster.

Cauthorpe, peering about in every direction, bones were breaking. And then if you couldn't get train to town, and so to America and the Rockies."

Cauthorpe stopped with his foot on the bottom be'ow. Then, very softly the band struck up a sweet, and took her fan from it.

Cauthorpe ground his teeth hopelessly. She was really minded whether they talked of ices or of her rejected suitor. And he wondered whether she wondered whether she was only playing with him as treating him as a cat treats a mouse.

He put out his hand, but she moved away a little, been three years ago.

He leant forward again eagerly, forgetful of his hold of your revolver you were a dead man."

This time she did not try to snub him. She had much. There is only one woman in the world that girl. "I think I ought to go."

When he showed symptoms of becoming passionate she had done three years ago, when he had rushed away. But now she wanted him to talk to her.

Below them they could hear people moving. The look flashing into his eyes. She never gave him his we had together? By-the-way, we seem to talk of and then I scrambled to my feet, and found my away to the Rockies rather than remain at home as strongly upon him that day. It was all as it had been thinking that he had improved since he went dreamy waltz.

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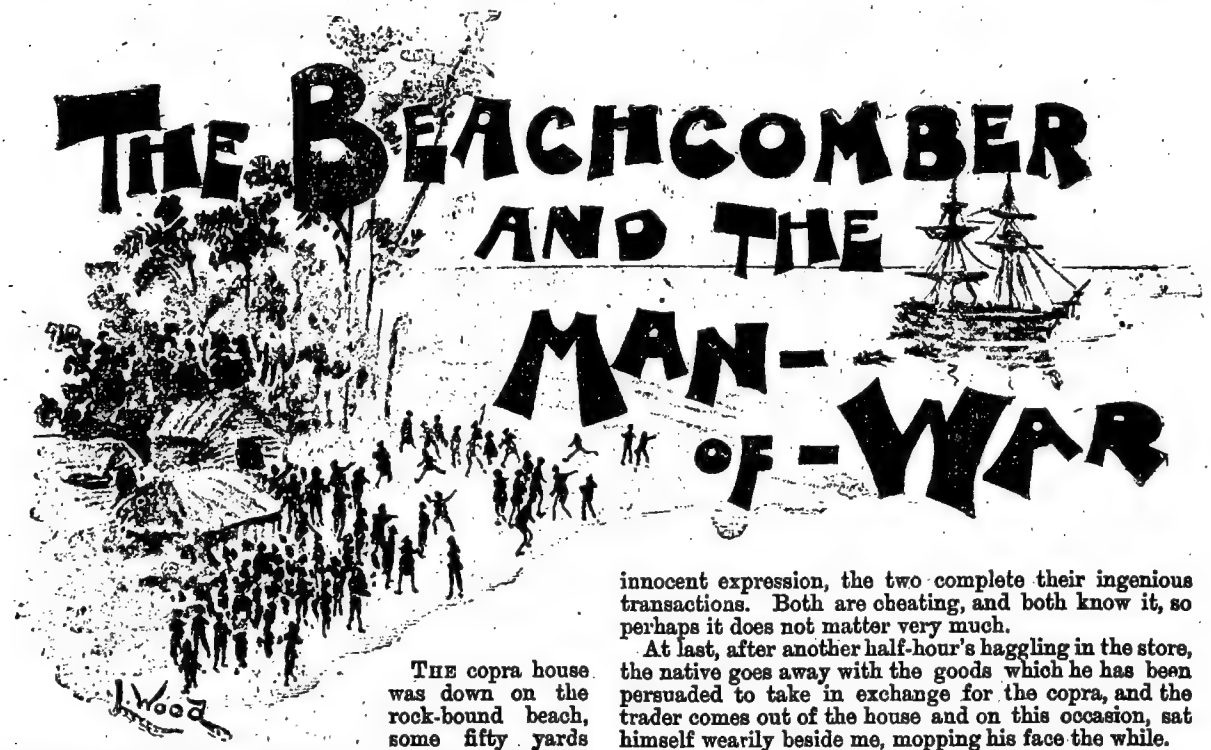
THE BEACHCOMBER AND THE MAN-OF-WAR



The copra house was down on the rock-bound beach, some fifty yards away from the shore, a stretch of uneven sandy soil, with grass patches here and there and great black rocks showing out from the surface, separating the two places where the trader did his business.

The copra house—the title is a misnomer, but it is always used in Samoa—was but a mere flimsy erection of rough boards, though iron-roofed and watertight. Further, the door was provided with a very substantial padlock, which the trader was at great pains to lock and unlock every time he visited the shed.

For the place held the only merchandise the country could produce—all that there was to trade for. The little bits of oily, brown, evil-smelling copra must be kept dry, or else they would rot long before the time came for shipping them to Europe. And they must be protected from theft.

Therefore, every time a Samoan came, perhaps with but a few baskets of the copra, the old trader, with a weary sigh, would take a key down from its accustomed nail, and plod down to the shed.

The first question that had to be decided was whether the copra was green, that is to say, whether it had been merely warmed in the sun, or whether it had been properly dried by several days' exposure. As the copra is bought by weight, it is, of course, to the native seller's interest to dry it as little as possible; whilst the trader, on the other hand, does not want to lose 20 or 30 per cent. by shrinkage.

At last the trader, grumbling somewhat, purchases the copra, for he knows if he does not, it will go to his rival close by. He is consoled by the reflection that his balances are twelve pounds out in every hundred. Also, he is an expert at weighing, and, by dexterously manipulating the scales can make the copra appear several pounds lighter than it really is.

And so, under the waving palms, by the side of the rippling lagoon, Nature smiling on them with her most innocent expression, the two complete their ingenious transactions. Both are cheating, and both know it, so perhaps it does not matter very much.

At last, after another half-hour's haggling in the store, the native goes away with the goods which he has been persuaded to take in exchange for the copra, and the trader comes out of the house and on this occasion, sat himself wearily beside me, mopping his face the while.

As usual he harked back to the old times.

"Things were different in those days," he said. "Then we could do as we liked with the natives: now they can do as they like with us. We have to cut things fine to make a living at all." And to console himself, he took a long drink of kava, emptying the cocoanut shell, which held about a pint, at one draught.

"The oil days were the times," he began, "before any one invented this copra, and we used to take oil from the natives in payment for everything. Why, even the missionaries used to have a big tank outside the church door and would take the collection in oil. It was gallons of oil instead of dollars then, but they got the money just the same in the end, and the church prospered."

His face clouded as he made this last remark. Perhaps he would have preferred the natives in their original barbaric state rather than civilised and christianised, and educated up to a standpoint of keen bargaining, which rendered it difficult for even the superior intellect of a white man to overreach them.

"I've made more money in a week then than I can do in a year now," he went on. "Forty years ago, when I was but a young fellow, I started trading on the southern side of Upolu. There was not a white man within twenty miles of me, and I could get any price I liked for an old uniform coat, especially if it had brass buttons on it. But a Tower musket, that was the thing.

"I had the place to myself for three years, and you may be sure I made a pretty good thing out of it. Wish I had some of the money left now. Then old Jack Wilkinson came along and settled down near me."

"But who was Jack Wilkinson?" I asked.

"Never heard of Jack Wilkinson—Old Jack as he was always called? Why, I thought everybody in Samoa knew of him. But he was getting to be an old man then, and he's been dead long since, and I suppose you young people have forgotten all about the old fogies.

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"When he got drunk."

"Well, I'll tell you about Jack. He was a hard case, one of the regular old style beachcombers. He had been I don't know how many years in the group, and had grown to be almost like a native. He used to wear a lava-lava instead of trousers, just like a Samoan, and he could go about bare foot anywhere, even on a coral reef, and that's a thing few white men can manage without cutting their feet to pieces.

"They did say," and he lowered his voice unconsciously, "that he was one of a party of convicts who had escaped from Australia when it was a penal settlement. They stole a boat, and somehow found their way here and made themselves at home amongst the natives. But the story was only whispered between white men, and it would have been as much as one's life was worth to even hint at the thing to Old Jack. He was a handy man with his knife, and there were no police about to call him to account for his actions.

"I got along well enough with Jack, though I must say he had ways of dealing with the natives which I hardly approved of. They were afraid of him, though, and fed him on the best the land could furnish.

"Jack never did anything for them in return; he spent his days lying on a mat in the shade of one of their big, cool houses, open all round so that the breeze could pass through, and Jack could see all that was going on without even moving. Sometimes, when he was particularly energetic, he would go fishing on the reef, at low tide, when coral showed up high above the water, and it was easy enough to spear malauli, with long, three-pronged native spears.

"Still, I soon found it was to my interest to keep in with Old Jack. He got twice as much oil as I could for the same amount of trade, and though he was always abusing and ill-treating the Samoans, strangely enough they would take their oil to him rather than to me.

"I own that I could never quite make it out to this day, and no man knows the crooks and twists of the Samoan character better than I do. I cannot understand what gave Jack his extraordinary influence over the people. Though, to be sure, in the end they killed him on Manono; but I'll tell you about that some other time.

"So it happened that Jack became a sort of sub-trader or assistant, and would buy the natives' oil, giving them, in return, orders on me for so much trade. I paid him a good commission and I could afford to do it, for so long as Jack was sober he was the best hand at bargaining with the Samoans I ever saw.

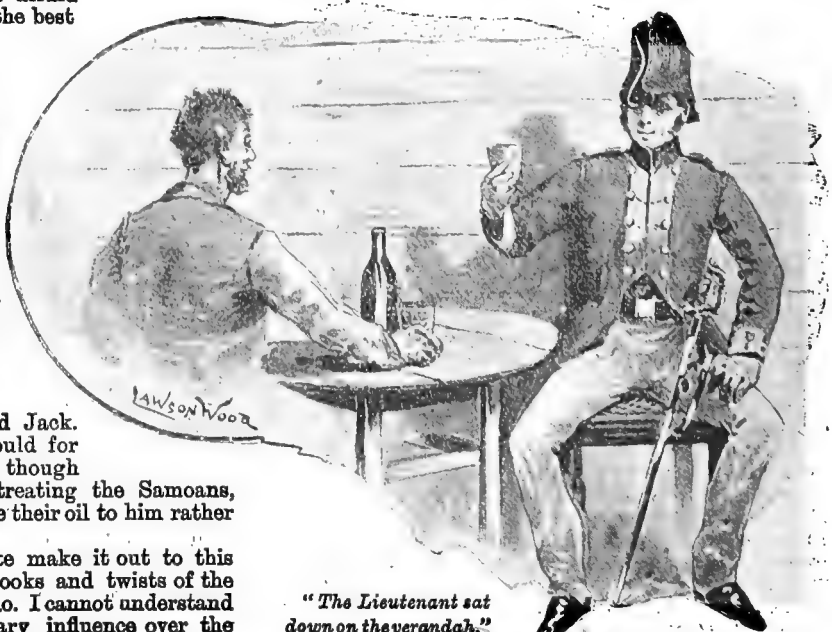
"But when he got drunk there was no holding him. I had to get a case of gin down from Apia now and again, or else Jack would never have stayed with me. Then he would go tearing wild for a week or two until it was all finished, and perhaps wind up by setting fire to a native house, or something like that. I had to pay for the damage, and then Jack sobered down and went along right enough for another month or two.

"It was this failing that had got the beachcomber into trouble at Tanuna, a village about twenty miles along the coast, where he had lived before coming to my place. The natives there had put up with him for a long time, but at last they got sick of the business, and the chiefs of the town turned dead against him, and gave him a week in which to clear out.

"For a long time Jack had been playing off an old beachcomber's bounce on the natives at Tanuna. Whenever they would turn a bit nasty he would threaten to bring a British man-of-war down on them, and have them well punished. This used to scare the people, for men-of-war were scarce in those days, and the Samoans had an almost superstitious awe of their guns.

"It's different now, for the natives have seen so much of modern war vessels that they've grown to despise them.

"They aren't afraid of being shelled either. Why, I've seen them over on Upolu when a man-of-war did actually fire on the rebels, sitting round smoking quite comfortable in the bush behind, whilst the shots were dropping into their villages, and doing no harm at all, except perhaps setting fire to a house or two. And



"The Lieutenant sat down on the verandah."

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when, by pure accident, a shell did fall into a cook house and kill five men, they said that the victims had been stealing the missionary's ducks, or else they would not have been killed. Shows the benefit of religious teaching, doesn't it?

"Well, to come back to Jack, the man-of-war game at last got played out, because no man-of-war came, and the natives would not believe him any longer. Then he had to clear, but at the very last, when he was leaving, he told them that he would soon come back, with a big war canoe, and make them pay a heavy fine in pigs.

"The Tanuna people only laughed at him, but as it turned out, strangely enough, Jack kept his word. He had been at Salua about six months, when a man-of-war actually did come, not after the natives, but after Jack himself.

"The consul had, at last—for news travelled slowly then—heard of Jack's pranks at Tanuna, and had sent

"He called all the chiefs together into the marae."

the *Sea Gull*, which happened to be in Apia at the time, down to arrest him. It was a bad look-out for Jack, for there were enough crimes charged against him to hang a dozen men.

"I was out away in the bush, hunting wild cattle, when the *Sea Gull* arrived, and that saved Jack. That and his own smartness. The vessel dropped into the lagoon at Salua, early one morning, and anchored about a mile from the shore. Jack, from his own hut, saw her come in, and guessed what she was after.

"Presently she lowered a boat, and a lieutenant, all gold lace, came ashore in style. Of course, he went to my place, for it was the only papalangi house about, and I suppose they thought I would be able to tell them the whereabouts of Jack, having heard that he had been seen about Salua.

"When the Lieutenant opened the gate, there was Jack, as bold as brass, sitting on an easy chair upon the verandah, reading an old newspaper, and looking very much at home.

"'You are Mr. Williams, I suppose,' said the Lieutenant, as polite as possible, taking off his hat.

"'Yessir,' said Jack, 'glad to meet you; step right in and make yourself at home.'

"So the Lieutenant sat down on the verandah, and Jack fetched out a bottle of gin, and they had two or three nobblers, quite sociable. The officer explained that he had come with a warrant for the arrest of John Wilkinson, whom the British Government wanted for murder, arson, and a whole host of other crimes.

"'Do I know the man?' says Jack. 'Why, he's the greatest scoundrel unhung, and he's ruining my trade by the lies he tells the natives. I only wish you would clear him out of Samoa.

"'Help you to catch him? Why, I should think I would, and so will every native in the town when they see the man-of-war here to back them up. The fellow was here last week, but he's gone to his old place, Tanuna, to try and get some pigs.'

"When the Lieutenant heard this, he was all in haste to get away.

"'Don't be in too much of a hurry,' said Jack, 'you'd better go slow; it's a most dangerous passage, and the chances are ten to one you'll get stuck on a reef. But if you'll wait a minute while I close the store, I don't mind going with you and piloting you round—I'd do anything to get that wretch caught.'

"So, Jack, putting on my best coat, went off with the Lieutenant, and the Captain, knowing nothing of the coast, was very glad to accept him as pilot, and gave £5 for his services too.

"On the passage round Jack spun them a long yarn about the savage natives of Tanuna. They were terribly fierce, he said, always fighting, and Wilkinson would probably stir them up to attack the landing party, and so prevent his arrest. They ought to go ashore with a strong armed force, and, if possible, a field gun or two.

"The advice sounded reasonable enough to the Captain, and it was quite a little army which landed that afternoon. There was a whole barge-load of sailors and marines, all armed to the teeth, and a couple of small

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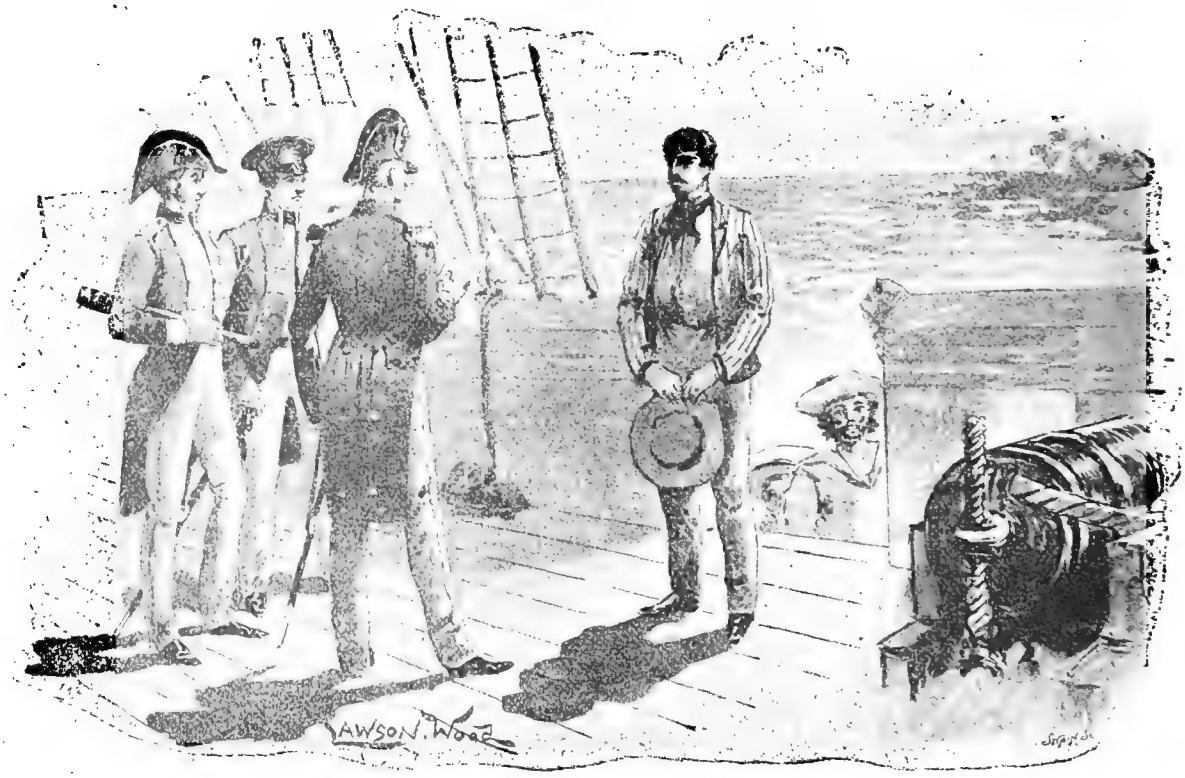

"I gave the Captain Jack's letter."

cannons, which they pointed at the big round chief's house in the centre of the village.

"It was Jack's turn now, and he made the most of it. He called all the chiefs together into the marae—that's the open space in the centre of the village where they always do their talking—and held a long fono. The Lieutenant stood by all the time, not understanding a word of what was going on.

"Jack told the trembling Samoans that the great Queen Victoria, in her palace over the big seas, had heard of the way in which one of her people had been treated, and had sent the man who was to blow the village into the air, to hang all the chiefs, and to carry off the rest of the people as slaves.

"Naturally, the chiefs, seeing all these soldiers with their guns, believed every word of the yarn, and grovelled before Jack, imploring him at least to save their lives.

"The rascally interpreter explained to the Lieutenant that the natives wished to pay homage to the Queen, and that they would take steps at once to find out where Wilkinson was hiding.

"On the other hand he told the chiefs that he had interceded for them, and that the officer had promised to spare their lives if they brought, next morning, a whole boat load of pigs and yams and taro and bananas, all the food they could raise.

"After some more talk, just to cover up his deceit, Jack informed the Lieutenant that the man they were after had gone to a place a few miles off in the bush, but that the natives would send after him and bring him back in the morning.

"So the officer, well satisfied, took his men and his guns on board again, and Jack stopped with the natives, being treated now with the greatest respect.

"Next day he had the large village war canoe loaded up with pigs and fresh provisions of all kinds, and went off to do some business with the *Sea Gull*. As they had had nothing but salt horse on board for a month, the purser was glad to buy the food, and Jack pocketed £20 by the transaction. He didn't give the natives a penny of it, but told them the man-of-war would let them off this time if they would promise to behave themselves in future.

"Then he informed the Captain he had learnt that Wilkinson had gone across the mountains to Salua, and that, if he liked, he would pilot him back there.

"On the way, Jack thought of a new dodge. He knew that, by this time, I would have returned from the cattle hunting expedition, and that, if he went ashore with the officer, they would find out who he was. So he persuaded the Captain it was no use going straight into Salua with the ship, for Wilkinson would only run away again as soon as he saw her coming.

"'You land me,' he said, 'at a point about a mile this side of town, and then stand out to sea for the night. I'll walk into Salua, and tell Wilkinson you've abandoned the search and gone away. I'll keep him there for the night, and the next morning you can slip in quietly and arrest him before he has time to get away.'

"The land to the westward of Salua juts out in a long point, so that a vessel coming from this direction, if she keeps well in shore, cannot be seen until she is right off the bay. The man-of-war lay to on the other side of this

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point, and Jack, who knew of a handy boat-passage through the reef, was put on shore.

"In the afternoon he walked into my house and found me wondering where he had got to, as I wanted him to help salt down a fine cow I had shot.

"'Never mind the blanked beef,' he shouted, 'get the gin quick, or else I shall die of laughing.'

"He just held his sides and screamed for about half-an-hour, and then when he had swallowed a couple of stiff nips he told me all about it.

"I couldn't help laughing, too, though I did not half like being personated by such an old scoundrel, and besides, I was afraid I might get into trouble when the captain found out the trick. He might think I had been helping Jack to deceive them, and perhaps arrest me instead.

"I told Jack this, but he only laughed the more. Then I got angry, told him to clear out at once, or else I would give him up when the ship came back. But he wouldn't go for a long time, not until he had finished the bottle.

"And before he left he wrote a letter to the captain. He wouldn't let me help him, though he was not much of a scholar, said he wanted to have the joke all to himself. I kept a copy of the letter as a curiosity. This is what he wrote:

"Dere Captain—This is to thank you for your kindness in takin me for a passage to Tanuna any times you want a pilet I shall be glad to be of servis ef you want any more pigs my friend williams will suppli them. I am goin back to the bush, ef you want me you must fetsh me from their.—Your grateful servint,

"J. Wilkinson.

"Then he went off into the thick bush which covered the mountains in the exterior of the island, where no white man could catch him.

"Next morning I had to bear my share of the joke. When the Lieutenant came on shore he found me sitting on the verandah, just where Wilkinson had been a couple of days before. He made sure he had got his man.

"It was no use my explaining, so I was arrested and taken to the man-of-war, and I gave the Captain Jack's letter. He was mad when he read it, but then, like a gentleman, he saw the joke, though it was against him.

"'We've been sold,' he said, 'most horribly sold,' and then he told his officers and they all laughed.

"They treated me well on board when they found that I was innocent, and I got them some Samoans to guide the party which went into the bush in pursuit of Jack. But it was no manner of use their trying to catch him, even if the natives had not taken care to lead them astray.

"So, after fooling about in the bush for a couple of days, climbing up and down mountains, and nearly falling over a precipice, they gave it up, and the man-of-war sailed away."

"And did Jack get off, after all?" I asked, for I could not help sympathising with the cunning scoundrel.

"Oh, Jack," concluded the stranger. "He came back to my place after a while, and hung round for a month or two. But Samoa, he could see, was getting too warm, so he took the first opportunity of escaping to Fiji."

J. F. Rose Soley.

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The Queen Against Owen

BY

Allen Upward,

Author of "Secrets of the Courts of Europe," "The Prince of Balkistan," etc., etc.

CHAPTER X.

The Verdict.

The secrets of the jury-room are little understood. Doubtless this is because all the more intellectual classes are exempted, by a beautiful provision of our law, from serving on juries, and the remainder have not yet produced a man competent to chronicle his experiences.

The Mynyddshire jurymen were very much like their brethren all over the country. They had sworn a solemn oath to well and truly try, and true deliverance make, between our Sovereign Lady the Queen and the prisoner at the bar, and they honestly tried to act up to their obligation.

Mr. Jenkins, the Queen Street stationer, was among them, and his first words, after the door was closed on them, were:

"Well, I don't know what you think, sir, but I couldn't make out whether he was for her or against her."

The person addressed was the foreman, a rich building contractor from a large seaport at the end of the county. He was a man of judicial mind, a model foreman, and wisely abstained from committing himself at this early stage. He turned round and asked his next neighbour, who happened to be the farmer from near Porthstone, whose remarks to Mr. Jenkins were given in the fourth chapter:

"How did it strike you, sir?"

"I thought he was against her," was the answer. "Didn't you hear him say: 'The prisoner must suffer by that line of defence?' And then he didn't say nothing about reasonable doubts."

"No; but the young barrister did—the one that prosecuted," observed a tall, thin man, a tailor by trade.

"He's got nothing to do with it," said the farmer. "I thought him a fool all along. I know his whole family, and they're all alike."

"What a terrible speech Mr. Tressamer made," ventured a fifth juryman, a short, stumpy watchmaker from Porthstone itself. "I believe he's her lover."

"What!" cried the foreman, losing his calm demeanour in the presence of this interesting revelation. "How d'ye know that?"

"Oh, it was common talk in Porthstone," was the answer. "They knew each other ever since they was children, and he used to come down every summer and go about with her. That's what made him so fierce against Mr. Lewis, you may depend."

"And did you know her?" "What was she like, really?" "What did you think of her?" broke from several voices as the whole jury clustered round the little man.

But he drew in his horns at once.

"Don't ask me anything," he said. "I've mended her watch, and I always thought she was all right up to this, but the Lord only knows whether she did it." He paused, and then, as if there were some vague connection in his mind between this charge and the general disposition towards acts of dishonesty, he added: "She always paid me regular."

Perhaps the jury scented an underlying distrust in this. At any rate one of them said:

"I watched the judge carefully all through, and I saw him frown at her several times. To my mind he meant us to say guilty."

The word came with a little shock to the men. They instinctively realised its terrible gravity as falling from their lips. The tall, thin tailor put in his word again:

"Anyhow, he said there was no evidence of motive."

"Except the jewels," corrected the farmer.

"Ah, but there was nothing came out about them."

"Phoo! that there was. Didn't you see how her counsel

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was fighting to keep it back? You may depend she knew all about them, and could tell us where they are now if she liked."

"You seem to have made up your mind," said another man, who had been talking aside to a little knot of three; "but for the life of me I couldn't make it out one way or the other. What did you think he meant about that latch-key?"

This was offensive. It was reminding them of their weak point. It threw the whole room into confusion. Eight or nine of the jury all began to speak at once, and four or five could find no listeners.

When the hubbub had a little subsided, the foreman said: "Gentlemen, it's no use talking it over in this way. We must argue it out one at a time. I propose that we all sit round the table, and the one that has anything to say stands up and says it properly."

This suggestion was well received, but it had a fatal effect on three of the jury, who were wholly unable to attempt anything so much like a set speech as this course involved.

As soon as all were seated the foreman commenced: "Gentlemen, this is a doubtful case, a very doubtful case. Talk of reasonable doubts, there's nothing but reasonable doubts, so far as I can see, from beginning to end. Now, it would have been a great help to us if the judge had showed us which way he thought we ought to go, but I confess I couldn't tell to which side he meant to lean. If any other gentleman thinks otherwise, we shall be glad to hear him."

But no other gentleman thought otherwise. The man who had thrown out the suggestion about the latchkey, and who was a fishing-boat proprietor from a seaside suburb of Abertaff, murmured from his seat:

"I call it a shame. I should like to know what a judge is for. We might as well try the case ourselves as this."

"So we are trying it, aren't we?" rebuked the man who had been the first to blurt out the fatal word, and who was a farmer from near the same place.

"You may be, Mr. Rees," returned the boat proprietor, with what was intended for biting sarcasm.

"Come, gentlemen, gentlemen," said the foreman impressively, "let us remember that we are engaged on a case of life and death. We have got to come at the truth somehow, and we must do what we can by ourselves."

"They should have given us more evidence," objected Mr. Jenkins. "What did they want to make so much fuss about those jewels for?"

"Aye, and there was another thing," said the Porthstone farmer. "Did you notice that when Mr. Lewis wanted to say why he suspected her, the judge wouldn't let un?"

"Well, she's an orphan," said the tailor, "and her father was rector of Porthstone for thirty years, and I say we ought to let her off."

"For shame, John," said the watchmaker, who happened to be his next-door neighbour. "Don't you know we've got to decide according to the evidence?"

The tailor hung his head.

Then the foreman interposed again.

"Really, gentlemen, I think it will save time if we go round the table and let each man express his opinion in turn. Of course, I don't say his final opinion, but just any remarks that strike him on the evidence. Will you begin, sir?"

Mr. Jenkins rose from his seat on the foreman's right and cleared his throat.

"Mr. Foreman and gentlemen, I think this is, as our foreman has told us, a case of very great doubt. At the same time, it is our duty to punish the guilty, and not let the prisoner off simply because she is a woman, and good-looking, and that sort of thing." (Subdued applause. The foreman raises his hand for silence.) "Now, what I look at in this case is the motive, and that is, I take it, the jewels. I don't believe she would have done it simply on the chance of getting something under the will. I don't know whether you remember, but the judge said Miss Lewis might have parted with the jewels, because they weren't found after her death. Now, it seems to me that that points just the other way. I mean, it looks as if she had been murdered for the sake of them. It seems to me the only question is: Who murdered her? Was it Mr. Lewis or was it Miss Owen? That's my difficulty."

He sat down. The farmer, who sat next him, stood up in turn.

"I say what the judge said—let us decide according to the evidence. Now, what evidence is there against Mr. Lewis? Why, you say the judge didn't speak out clearly, but he did say there wasn't any evidence against him. All the evidence is against her, and we ought to act upon it."

The next speaker was a rather young man, who occupied a position of superintendence in a large millinery establishment, exclusively patronised by ladies. With such associations he was naturally disposed to be chivalrous. He said: "I know a lady when I see her. Miss Owen's a lady; anyone can see that with half an eye. As for Lewis, I didn't like the looks of him at all. You know they're a wild lot out in Australia. I heard that he came back for good reasons if the truth was known. Then look how he lost his temper in the witness-box! And then, as Mr. Tressamer said, the very night he got there the murder happened. That looks as if he did it. He said she didn't give him a latchkey, but I believe she very likely did, else why did the barrister ask him? And then look at the hand being cut off. No young lady would go and do such a thing as that, surely!"

The jury were impressed. The next man was of a shy and gentle disposition. He did not venture to get on his feet, but threw out a suggestion as he sat: "I suppose it must have been one of the two. There couldn't have been somebody else, could there?"

A withering look from eleven faces rewarded this disconcerting query. The foreman expressed the general feeling: "Really, sir, I can't think what ground you have for suggesting such a thing. The case is difficult enough as it is, without having fresh doubts raised."

"Ah, there ought to have been a London detective brought down," muttered another juryman, who had taken little part hitherto. "One of them would have puzzled it out, you may depend."

"Well, I don't see what more you would have," said the other farmer, Rees, rising in his turn. "Here is this young woman, sleeping in the next room, going out at night secretly, under some pretence of headaches—why didn't she tell other people about them beside that chemist?—and here you have her mistress murdered, and the blood found on the door of her own room the next morning. What more do you want?"

He sat down. It was now the tailor's turn.

"And how do you know Lewis didn't put the blood there?" he asked. "I believe it's Lewis myself. Anyway, one of them must have done it, that's clear."

But this was felt to be a weak defence, and the next two jurymen shook their heads, and professed themselves unable to throw any light upon the question. Then it was the turn of the boat proprietor.

"Look here," he said, "what's the good of our trying to come to a verdict when we're none of us sure which of them did it? Better give it up, and tell the judge we can't agree."

But the foreman would not hear of this.

"No, sir," he said, "we are here sworn to do justice between man and man, and mete out punishment to the guilty, and we must not shrink from our task. We have heard the case through, and if we are not competent to give a verdict on it, who is?"

This was felt to be unanswerable. Not only were the foreman's words worthy of attention in themselves, but he was a great man, the reputed possessor of twelve thousand a year; he wore a frock coat and a white waistcoat as well,

and his word was, therefore, practically equivalent to law.

There remained only the watchmaker. He felt a friendly feeling towards the prisoner, but he was troubled by real misgivings as to her innocence.

"The judge said we oughtn't to go against Mr. Lewis," he said, "and I stand by what the judge says. Besides, I look at what he said when he gave her in charge."

"What was that?" said the foreman eagerly.

"I'll tell you, sir. It was in the paper at the time, and I happened to keep it by me, and so when I was summoned as a juror, thinks I to myself: 'This may come in useful if I should happen to be on the jury that's to try her,' so I just cuts it out and brings it in my pocket."

The other men looked on keenly, as he slowly drew out his pocket-book and extracted a newspaper cutting, embracing some two and a half columns of the Southern Daily News. Everyone hoped that something of a decisive character would now be forthcoming.

The watchmaker ran his finger down the columns.

"Here it is!" he exclaimed, and read it aloud.

"'On reaching the police station, of which Constable Smithies was then in charge, Mr. Lewis said: "I charge Eleanor Owen with the murder of my aunt, Ann Elizabeth Lewis. I have made some money, and, please God, I'll spend every penny of it rather than my poor aunt shall remain unavenged."

"'Constable Smithies at once summoned Sergeant——' that's it," concluded the watchmaker, looking up from his extract.

A murmur and shaking of heads followed, and the foreman again felicitously voiced the general feeling:

"*That* doesn't sound like guilt," he said with emphasis. "May I see that paper? Perhaps it has some other things which we have forgotten."

"Certainly, sir. But I don't know whether we ought to be reading this," hazarded its owner, handing the slip across.

"Why not? We're only doing it to refresh our memory."

This reply was again felt to be worthy of its author. It had a fine flavour of legality about it, too, which gave confidence to the other jurymen. They realised that they were fortunate in their foreman.

That gentleman meanwhile proceeded to glance down the document before him. Presently he stopped, frowned, pursed up his lips, and breathed a stern sigh. The others watched with anxiety. He proceeded to enlighten them:

"Gentlemen, listen to this, and tell me what effect it has on your mind. Sergeant Evans said: 'I arrested the prisoner on the morning of the second. I told her she was charged with the wilful murder of Ann Elizabeth Lewis. She turned pale and said: "It is impossible." I cautioned her. She said nothing more, and *shed no tears*.' Gentlemen, is that like innocence?"

He laid down the paper. The prisoner's doom was sealed. The waverers among the jury went over at once, and even the friends of the prisoner no longer dared to hold out. The tailor would have resisted if he had dared, but his sense of social inferiority was too much for him. What was he, a humble little tradesman, to set himself against eleven men, headed by a wealthy contractor who wore three spade guineas on his watch-chain.

Then a solemn awe settled down over the faces of the twelve men. They did not hesitate in doing what they believed was their duty, but they felt some natural horror of the result. At last the foreman said:

"Gentlemen, are we all agreed?"

And, as there was no reply, he led them back into court.

They had not been out quite an hour, but the interval seemed terribly long to those they left behind.

When they came in one by one, with drooping heads and set faces, the verdict was read before it was heard. Only the prisoner still held out, with that obstinate unbelief in the worst which is a part of strong natures. Only the prisoner and the prisoner's counsel. He manifested no sorrow and no surprise. Prescott put his stoical calmness down to over-exhaustion, others of the Bar attributed it to his confidence in the point reserved. The public hardly noticed him. Their eyes were fixed upon the dock.

The Clerk of Arraigns stood up, and went as best he could through the tedious process of calling each juryman by name. Then followed the routine question, followed by the awful word, heavy with issues of death, pealing forth through the hushed, agitated hall.

"*Guilty!*"

The prisoner neither moved nor answered, as the Clerk formally summoned her to declare if there were any reasons why sentence should not be passed upon her. Some of the women whispered that she had gone mad, or that she was going to faint. The judge covered his wig with the sombre square of silk.

Suddenly she looked up, cast her eyes rapidly round the court, and fixing them full on Prescott, who was attentively watching her, she exclaimed:

"I am *not* guilty."

"Eleanor Margaret Owen, the jury, after a long and patient hearing, and after taking time for careful deliberation, have found you guilty of the crime of wilful murder. What motive inspired you to commit such a crime I cannot say, and it may, perhaps, never be known. It only remains for me to discharge my very painful duty, which I do by declaring that the sentence of the court upon you is——"

The details followed. The words are too familiar to need setting forth. They sounded in unconscious ears. Eleanor Owen had fainted at last, and was carried helpless and lifeless away from the scene of her long martyrdom.

CHAPTER XI.

The Prisoner's Statement.

The day after the trial Tressamer went with confident mien to the prison for the purpose of having an interview with Eleanor as to the appeal of which he had given notice.

The governor at first hesitated about permitting this. The prison regulations forbid intercourse with a convict, except under certain rigorous limitations; but the name and function of counsel prevailed, and a warder was sent to fetch the prisoner.

Presently he returned alone, with the startling message that Eleanor positively refused to hold any communication whatever with her late advocate. Tressamer left the gaol with the air of a beaten man.

In his dismay he bethought himself of Prescott, and hurried to the court-house to find him and get his advice. He was there, but he was busy in a case then before the Nisi Prius Court, and it was not till late in the afternoon that Tressamer could get a word with him.

The case had been decided in favour of Prescott's client, and he strode into the robing-room with a little natural elation. But no sooner did he catch sight of his friend, who was waiting for him there, than his whole manner changed, and a stern expression settled round the corners of his mouth.

It was their first meeting since the result of Eleanor's trial. They were alone in the room, and Prescott at once addressed the other:

"Tressamer, what have you to say for yourself? I told you yesterday that I should hold you responsible. You disobeyed my advice, and that of everybody else. You set the judge and jury against you, and the result is what you were told it would be. I gave you fair warning, and I tell you now that, unless you have some reason for your conduct of which I know nothing, I cannot look upon you as a friend."

Tressamer pinched in his lips hard as he listened to this.

"I might have expected it," he said. "We all know that love is stronger than friendship. The first woman that likes can break up the strongest attachments of some men."

"Silence!" cried Prescott. "I am not going to bandy retorts with you. Ever since we were boys I have liked you and befriended you, and borne with your waywardness. You have outraged all your other friends long ago, but I bore with everything till now. But this is too much. Where a life is at stake, to indulge in your freaks of eccentricity! It is murder morally. What are you better than the man who killed that wretched woman?"

Tressamer shook with anger.

"Be careful, Prescott! I will stand a great deal from you, but you are going too far now. You know as well as I do that her life is in no danger. What is old Buller's opinion worth on a criminal case? Wiseman is worth ten of him, and he is in our favour. The C.C.R. will save her."

"Wretched man! Have you no heart, no moral sense, that you talk like that? As if a mere escape on a technical point could give any comfort to a woman like her! One would think you were wanting in some ingredient of human nature. What does Eleanor herself say?"

"I haven't seen her," was the muttered reply.

"Haven't seen her! Then go at once, and get her authority to appear."

"I have been to the prison, but she won't see me. I suppose she is ill."

A look of positive pleasure crossed the face of the elder man.

Eleanor Owen had fainted at last.

"Ill—no, but innocent!" he exclaimed. "I can understand her refusing to see you. You have played with her life for the prize of infamy, and you deserve that she should discard you. This is the best thing I have heard yet. Why, I could almost forgive you now for telling me. I will go this instant and offer my services: they will be those of a plain, honest man."

And, flinging off his wig and gown, he rushed out of the place in a very unwonted state of excitement.

Tressamer was left, bewildered and enraged, to curse his own folly in betraying his defeat to a rival.

* * * * *

When Eleanor was summoned by the gaoler to see Mr. Prescott, she at first thought there must be some mistake.

"Are you sure you don't mean Mr. Tressamer?" she asked.

"No; he said Prescott."

A faint smile rose in her face. She eagerly assented to the interview, and in a couple of minutes the two were closeted together.

At first there was a brief, awkward silence. Then Prescott broke it by speaking in calm, precise words:

"It is nearly five years since we met, Miss Owen, but I hope you have not quite forgotten me."

"No, indeed," she answered; "but you should have forgotten me. I know I ought to thank you for this visit, and for dealing so leniently with the case yesterday, but I cannot find the right words. It is all so strange—so terrible and so strange."

Prescott was afraid to look at her, lest the tears should come into his eyes.

"Don't thank me, please. I wish I could forgive myself for taking that wretched brief at all. I can only say I did so for fear it might fall into the hands of some abler and bitterer prosecutor. The solicitors were your enemies."

"Yes; I refused their services. I have wondered since if I was wise. It was Mr. Tressamer who advised me."

"And why? Why did you trust yourself so entirely to that man? But I forgot. I believe you are or were engaged."

Eleanor raised her eyes, and looked long and searchingly at her questioner. Suddenly she said:

"Before I tell you, why did you come here—for any special object, I mean?"

"Yes. I came, hearing you had refused—and in my opinion rightly refused—to see Mr. Tressamer. I came, taking the privilege of an old friend of your father's and your own, to ask if I might appear for you in the court to which your case is being taken."

"Ah, then there is a Providence. I am not quite deserted!"

She spoke in half irony, and then all at once broke down and began sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Miss Owen!—don't, Eleanor!" cried her friend in alarm and distress. "Do try and be calm. All will end happily yet, believe me. I swear to you I will never rest till your innocence is established by the discovery of the real criminal, and the stain removed from your character!"

For some time she wept on without replying. At last the sobs grew feebler, and she lifted her head.

"Oh, if you knew," she said, "what I have gone through these last two months—no, I ought to say these last two years, since my father died, and that you are the first to speak to me in tones that I can trust, you would not wonder that I weep. Sometimes I have felt it too much to bear, and I have actually thought before now of writing to you to tell you all my troubles."

"To me! Why, do you—are you——"

She checked him gently.

"To you, as to my oldest friend, whose memory I could recall with trust and confidence. I am speaking now of a time that has passed. Now I shall never consent to claim anyone as my friend—if I live—until this horrible stain has been wiped off my name."

"I will wipe it off. Only trust me fully meanwhile, and if you won't claim my friendship, at least so far rely on it as to unburden yourself to me freely. Tell me all, because I feel that you may hold in some way the clue to this mystery. I cannot think that all the circumstances piled up against you were purely accidental, and I must know everything before I can see my way clearly."

She shook her head doubtfully.

"I am afraid that my story will not throw much light on the murder. Indeed, I fear I am abusing your kindness in troubling you with my affairs. It is a father-confessor I want, not a lawyer." And she smiled faintly.

But Prescott was in earnest, and at length he persuaded her to speak. Making allowance for some repetitions and some slips of memory, her story was something like this:

"When my father died I was only seventeen. In spite

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of his being rector, we had lived a very retired life and seen few visitors. The only people I knew at all intimately were Miss Lewis and the Tressamers.

"Miss Lewis had been in the habit of inviting me to her house ever since I can remember. She used to give me valuable presents too. In fact, she treated me more like a niece or some near relation than a mere acquaintance. I can never forget her kindness—never, never!"

She had to stop a moment or two to overcome her emotion.

"I dare say you remember as much about the Tressamers as I could tell you. You know that I was constantly at their house. George Tressamer and I were always friends, and he showed me great kindness when I was a mere child. I remember I used to look forward to his coming home for the holidays. Neither of us had any brothers or sisters, and so we were more ready to seek each other's company, I suppose.

"But I never quite understood him. I could see, even at an early age, that there was something in his feeling towards me quite different from ordinary friendship. And yet it was only friendship that I felt for him—yes, even to the very last, I assure you. I never felt for him any warmer feeling than gratitude and affection.

"When my dear father died, I was at first in despair. Only two people would I listen to—my aunt Lewis, as she liked me to call her, and George. My own relations were all far away. I had never seen them, and they were too poor to do anything for me. So when Miss Lewis offered me a home I had no choice but to accept. And I was very, very grateful for it.

"But in the meantime George had shown me a great deal of kindness. He came down from London on purpose, directly he heard of my father's death. He made all the arrangements for the funeral, and wound up all my father's affairs. I believe he must have paid some money out of his own pocket, as I know my poor father always spent every penny of his income, and was often hard pressed for money. But there were no demands ever made on me. All the things I expressed a wish for were saved, and after the rest were sold, and all debts settled, George brought me a sum of two hundred pounds, which he said was mine."

Prescott frowned thoughtfully, and drummed with the toe of his boot on the floor.

"I suppose he didn't give you any accounts?" he said.

"No; I never asked for any. I felt sure that my father couldn't really have left me so much as that, and I told Miss Lewis I thought so. But she seemed to think it was all right, and I really was too distressed at his death to think much about money matters, one way or the other.

"Well, that wasn't all. Not only did he see to these business affairs for me, but he did everything he could to console me besides. He brought me books to read, he persuaded me to go for walks, and, in fact, he succeeded in making me get over my first grief sooner than I had thought it possible. The result was that I came to rely on him very much. I looked for him constantly, and felt a disappointment if a day passed without bringing him to see me.

"This was in the vacation time. At last he had to go up to London, and left me feeling very lonely. He offered to write to me, and I was glad to accept. We corresponded the whole term, nearly every week, and at Christmas he came down again.

"By this time some months had gone by since my father's loss, and I was beginning to recover my ordinary spirits. George saw this; he gave me more of his company than ever, and finally, before the Christmas holidays were over, he told me that he loved me.

"You will think I ought to have been prepared for this. Perhaps another girl would have been, but I can only say that it took me completely by surprise. You see, I had never known any other young man at all intimately, and George I had looked upon more as a brother than anything else. When he spoke of love, my first feeling was one of annoyance and fear. I shrank from answering, and when he pressed me I asked him to let me have time to think it over. He wisely dropped the subject, and before we got home he was chatting to me as familiarly as ever.

"The result was that I began to think that the love which he offered me was nothing very deep, but only a warm friendship like what I felt for him. Then I reflected on my own position, as an orphan, dependent on one who was no relation and might cast me adrift at any moment. I realised what a loss it would be to be deprived of George's friendship. I had never really felt anything that I could call love for anyone else, and, in short, I reconciled myself by degrees to the idea. At Easter of that year I accepted him.

"In all this I had made one great mistake. I thought George's feeling towards me was a mild one. The moment we were engaged I found the very opposite.

"When I first uttered the words which gave him the right to do so, he clasped me to him with a transport which frightened me. It was actually fierce in its intensity. He lost all that studied control which he had maintained for so long, and fairly gave himself up to the intoxication of his passion. Had I dreamed what his state of feeling really was, I don't believe that I should ever have promised myself to him. But it was too late to draw back. He had obtained a power over me, from which I shrank, but of which I had no right to complain. I became in a sense his slave, and he did with me what he chose.

"From that moment, unhappily, my own feelings towards him underwent a rapid change. I ceased to look forward to his coming. I got in time to actually dread it. Instead of taking pleasure in his society, I feared him. I disliked the little tokens of proprietorship which are common in the case of an engaged couple. I did not even tell Miss Lewis that we were engaged, though I believe she looked upon it as an understood thing. In fact, I suppose it would not have done for me to see so much of George otherwise. Neither did I dare to tell her of the aversion which had begun to replace my former feelings towards him. To tell the truth, I was ashamed of it. In common gratitude, after all George had done for me, I ought not to have allowed myself to feel so. I did try to check it. I told myself of all his good qualities; I recalled how long I had known him, and how friendly we had always been. But it was no use.

"Sometimes he seemed to realise that I was alienated by his passionate displays. Then he would return for awhile to his old manner, and be cheerful and cynical with me. Then my confidence in him returned, and I enjoyed his company. But this would not last long. When I was least expecting it, he would break into a chain of what I can only call love-frenzy, and disturb me more than ever.

"It was impossible for me to hide what was going on in my mind from him always. He began to find out that I avoided him. Instead of openly coming and calling for me to go out with him, he took to lying in wait, as it were, and joining me when I was out by myself. Of course, nothing was said between us. I did not complain of his stratagems, and he did not complain of my excuses; but I think we understood each other.

"Then he managed to get Miss Lewis on his side. He used to come into the room where we both were and give me an invitation for a walk or sail or other excursion in his company, and if I tried to get out of it, he appealed to Miss Lewis to give me leave, and, of course, she then urged me to go. The way in which he went to work inspired me with a queer sort of admiration for him. I thought that he showed powers of intrigue that would have made him a great man if he had been able to apply them on some vast stage."

"Yes, yes," said Prescott, as she paused a few moments for breath; "he has great ability, strange powers in many things, but——"

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He shrugged his shoulders, and turned a pitying eye on Eleanor. He had known Tressamer well enough to be able to understand her experience.

She went on again:

"Strange to say, you were the cause of our first open quarrel, about six months ago."

"I? How?"

"You know you had not been to Rivermouth for some four years or more. But I remembered you perfectly, and used always to ask George about you when he came down from London. At last, on this occasion, he happened to say he had a recent photograph of you. I got him to show it to me, and then I wanted to keep it. He objected; I persisted, and finally his jealousy was aroused.

"'You always liked Prescott better than me,' he said.

"'I haven't even seen him for five years,' I said. 'I remember him as an old friend, and I don't see why you should mind my taking an interest in him.'

"'Taking an interest!' he scoffed back. 'I wish you would take an interest in me. You have never asked me for my photograph, that I recollect.'

"But I needn't tell you all that we said. It ended in his accusing me of not loving him, and in my saying that he was at liberty to find someone else, if he was dissatisfied with me.

"But he—he would not take the release. He altered his tone all at once, and fell at my feet, protesting that he loved me above all others, and that nothing should ever separate us.

"So things went on, he alternately courting me and threatening me, I turning from coldness and dislike, and from dislike to detestation. But I hadn't the courage to break my bondage, intolerable as I sometimes felt it. Perhaps I should never have shaken myself free but for his own action in bringing things to a crisis. Our letters had been friendly for some time, and, at last, in the month of May, he threw out a suggestion in one that it was time to think of our marriage.

"I took no notice of this. He repeated it more distinctly. Then I wrote, objecting that I was far too young to think of such a thing for some time to come. He took the alarm, came down by the next train, and sought me out. We went together to a lonely part of the shore, and there we came to a full explanation.

"Don't ask me what passed between us. He may be able to tell you. I never can. Enough, that after four hours' agonised entreaty and storm on his part, and agonised endurance on mine, we parted. I told him I could never hold intercourse with him again on any footing, and left him apparently resigned. That was just two days before my friend was murdered.

"He left the place next day, and I did not see him again till after I had been lodged in prison.

"There he came to me, asking no return to the old relations, but simply the privilege of befriending and defending me in my fearful trouble. I was crushed by his generosity, and freely gave myself to his guidance.

"But even in that first interview he threw out a suggestion which shocked and repelled me. He seemed to take it for granted that the jury would convict me, and to rely upon getting me off on a law point. I told him that life would not be worth anything to me under such conditions, and in reply he hinted that his devotion would still be mine, if I cared for it.

"Since then you have seen how it has happened exactly as he foretold. Now, it seems a dreadful thing to say, but the suspicion has forced itself into my mind, and I cannot get rid of it, that he wished all along that I might be blighted in my reputation, and just be saved at the last from actual condemnation, so that I might be driven to take refuge with him."

She spoke these last sentences in a whisper, as if afraid to hear such suggestions even from her own lips.

Prescott gave a groan.

"Would to Heaven I could contradict you!" he said, "but I believe it myself."

And he related to her what had passed between his friend of old and himself. Then he went on to ask:

"By the way, can you tell me anything more about that night than what came out in court? It was you who went out the first time, I take it?"

"Yes, I had been quite unwell for some time, owing to my trouble with George Tressamer. After our final meeting I had a terrible headache, and could not sleep at all. I went out each night about the same hour, but I haven't the faintest idea where I wandered to or how long I was gone. I got a little sleep after I came in, towards the morning."

"And what do you think yourself of this man, Lewis?"

"I can hardly say. He has shown himself my enemy, and, of course, I cannot like him."

"But as to suspecting him?"

"Oh, dear no. I suspect no one."

"Not one of the servants—Rebecca for instance?"

"No. I haven't any inkling whatever as to who committed the crime."

"Well, I suppose I must leave you. I will do whatever is in my power for your deliverance, not merely from danger, but from disgrace, and if I fail I will never venture in your sight again."

(To be continued.)

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On receipt of stamped envelope, a lady who cured herself of Deafness and Noises in the Head, after fifteen years of suffering, will send to all afflicted free particulars of the Remedy, which is simple, safe, sure and inexpensive. Address — Mrs. C. E. AUSTIN, 7, Addington Crescent, York Road, London, S.E.

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Permanently cured in a few days by a simple, inexpensive self-treatment. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to Dr. A. M. CURTIS, York Chambers, Adelphi, London, W.C.

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A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.

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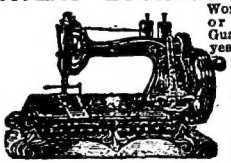

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If you require a reliable remedy for the relief of superfluous fat, send for a box of my "H.D." Pills. No starvation required; you may eat and drink what you like, yet I guarantee to either sex a permanent reduction of 5lb. to 7lb. weekly. They are a harmless vegetable preparation; successful in the most stubborn cases, and improve health and figure. Their action is rapid, certain, safe, tasteless, and highly recommended. Prices, 2s. 9d., 4s. 6d., and 11s., post free, plain wrapper. PROFESSOR F. T. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

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Lamb's Wool Shirts and Pants, 3/6 each.
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On receipt of stamped addressed envelope a lady will send to those afflicted with Superfluous Hairs, free particulars of a simple remedy which *permanently* removed a large growth from her sister's face without injuring the skin. Address, in confidence, Miss E. R. DALE, 32, Belvedere Rd., Lambeth, London.

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Hornbeam Skittles; Sycamore Skittles; Four Corners; American Pins; Cheese Ball, Warranted; Round Ball, Warranted; Lawn Bowls.

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In Patent Air-tight Tins, ¼lb., 10d.; ½lb., 1s. 4d.; 1lb., 2s. 4d.; 2lb., 4s. 4d.; including tin and postage.

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THE GREAT COUGH REMEDY, # BRONCHONIA.

A Marvellous Remedy for Coughs, whether arising from Consumption, Bronchitis, or Asthma. Its efficacy is testified to by Eminent Physicians. Of all Chemists, 2s. 6d., 4s. 6d., and 11s. per bottle. Post free, 2s. 9d., 4s. 9d., and 11s. 6d.—J. HOWARD & Co., 20 and 21, Queenhithe, LONDON, E.C. **One Trial will prove its Efficacy.**

IT WAS NOT THE CLIMATE.

"I have been well as to my general health"—so wrote the late Dr. O. W. Holmes a short time before his death—"but have had a good deal of asthma. The climate is cold and rough, but I have found much that is delightful about my residence in Boston (America). Perhaps, after all, the fault is not so much in latitude 42 *as in age* 82."

That was it. The wise thinker did not deceive himself. He knew that it is the wasting muscles that complain of the steepness of the hills, and the thinning blood that fancies the winters are colder than they used to be.

And it was not because Mrs. Amy Harvey had lost interest in her domestic affairs that she was led to say everything was a trouble and a burden. No; it was because she had lost her strength. Whether a duty is a burden or not depends on the back which has to carry it. Ah, dear me, how constantly experience enforces that lesson upon us. *Then* what keen concern we feel in the answer to the question: What will strengthen the quivering limbs? What will restore the vigour of the mind?

"All my life," says Mrs. Harvey, "I have suffered off and on from indigestion and weakness. I felt low and languid, with a disagreeable sinking sensation after taking my meals. I had no energy; everything *was a trouble and a burden*. As soon as I had partaken of food, no matter how light, I felt a fulness and a gnawing pain at my chest, as if something were tearing it.

"I also suffered much from nervous headache, and was often dizzy. My breathing was short, and if I exerted myself I was quite out of breath. As time went on I got extremely weak and could not attend to my work.

"I saw doctor after doctor, and was told by them that my ailment was owing to my food not digesting."

[The doctors were right. That was the trouble, and the only one. Yet instead of being a comparative trifle, as many shallow persons say, it is the most serious of all diseases. Of course, *some* of her food digested more or less fully; otherwise she could not have lived a fortnight. But the nourishment was never enough for the wants of the body. Hence the nervous headaches, the asthma, the sinking sensation, the dizziness, the gnawing pain, and the disabling weakness. The body under these conditions is like a house abandoned to decay. All goes to rack and ruin.]

"I took the doctors' medicines," continues this lady's plain account, "but my case was an obstinate one, and none of them seemed of any avail.

"In May, 1891, a neighbour told me of the benefit she had derived from Mother Seigel's Syrup. I got a bottle from Messrs. W. Fox and Son, Chemists, Bethnal Green, and when I had taken it two days I felt much relief. I continued taking it, and could eat and enjoy my food without having pain. I now gained strength and *felt brighter than I had ever done in my life.*

"Since then I have kept well, taking a dose or two of Mother Seigel's Syrup when I need it; and I find it always puts me right. You can publish this statement if you think fit. (Signed) (Mrs.) Amy Harvey, 19, 'J' Block, Dufferin Street, Bunhill Row, London, June 26th, 1896."

"In March, 1894," writes another, "I had a severe attack of influenza which left me extremely weak. I was troubled with indigestion and want of appetite. Having read of the wonderful cures made by Mother Seigel's Syrup I decided to try it. I got a bottle from Mr. Wm. Hy. Jones, the chemist in Caledonian Road. In two days I felt great benefit. I could eat, and food agreed with me, causing no pain. *In a few days I was completely cured and well as ever.*

"Since that time I have kept Mother Seigel's Syrup in the house as a family medicine, and it always relieves when any of us suffer from indigestion, etc. I have pleasure in making this statement, and you can publish it if you wish. (Signed) Geo. H. Barker, 44, Montpelier Road, Kentish Town, London, N.W., June 9th, 1896."

These excellent letters call for no explanation. Their sincerity and truth is plain on the surface. And when we remember that what the writers affirm of Mother Seigel's Syrup is also declared by thousands of others, the value of this remedy is established beyond question.